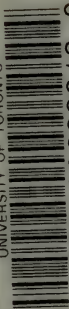


Green-Room Recollections

Arthur Wm. à Beckett

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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Green=Room

Recollections

BY

ARTHUR WM. À BECKETT

AUTHOR OF

"HARD LUCK; OR, A MURDER AT MONTE CARLO"

"TRACKED OUT: A SECRET OF THE GUILLOTINE," ETC.



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INTRODUCTION.

“HAPPY is the book that requires no preface!” So said one of the most celebrated of our writers. I am inclined to share in his belief, and therefore make my preliminary remarks as few as possible. The title of my work is self-explanatory. The Green-room is the spot sacred to theatrical stories, as the green curtain is the end to all dramatic representations. So I have called my reminiscences of the playhouse and its surroundings (now collected for the first time in volume form) “GREEN-ROOM RECOLLECTIONS.”

As my chapters have had a trial canter through the pages of the periodical press, I have had the advantage of contemporary criticism. Thus I have been able to “verify my facts” with the assistance of those most concerned. If there still be errors in the book (for memory is not always faithful), I shall be only too pleased to stand corrected—in the next edition.

ARTHUR WM. A BECKETT.

GARRICK CLUB,
Christmas, 1895-96.



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BEHIND THE CURTAIN.



Behind the Curtain.

ONE-PART PLAYS.

HALF-A-DOZEN HAMLETS.

DRAMATIC DOUBLES.

AMONG THE SINGERS.

AUTHOR, ARTIST, DOCTOR, AND PLAYER.

PLAYWRIGHT, ACTOR, AND MANAGER.

AT THE SIGN OF "THE RED-HOT POKER."

"HENRY VIII."—PAST AND PRESENT.

ABOVE THE SCENES AT COVENT GARDEN.

THE PLAY AND THE "'VARSITY."

THE MILITARY BEHIND THE SCENES.

A VANISHED PLAYHOUSE.



One-part Plays.

All-round
Company's
Plays.

IN England the piece that has served only as a background to a star actor has never long been popular. For a while, a tragedian or a comedian has appeared as the Alpha and the Omega of an evening's entertainment; but, sooner or later, has had to call to his assistance the help of a good plot and a fairly efficient company. In the case of the performance of the plays of Shakespeare, it is absolutely necessary that the salary list shall include more than one exponent of the first rank. Hamlet must be properly supported by Claudius, Laertes, Ghost, Gertrude, and Ophelia. Othello cannot do without Iago, Cassio, Roderigo, Emilia, and Desdemona; and Macbeth would certainly be tame indeed without his wife and MacDuff, his ultimate conqueror. So, again, Sheridan and Goldsmith always wrote for good, all-round companies—not for stars, but for constellations. However, within our own time, there have been one or two conspicuous exceptions to the general rule, and it may be not out of place to give them consideration.

When I first met Sothern, he had just made
as a great success in an utterly impossible but
"Lord Dundreary." wholly amusing character. He had been
stock actor in a provincial company before visiting
America, and the story goes that he had been given
a small part in one of Tom Taylor's comedies, in
support of Jefferson. Originally the chief character
(as the title of the piece itself suggests) was "Our
American Cousin." Asa Trenchard, a typical stage
Yankee, was to come over to his English relatives, to
show the world the difference between Republican and
Monarchical institutions. But it was a case of the tail
wagging the dog—the eccentric part actor extinguishing
the low comedian—for Asa was nowhere in the presence
of Lord Dundreary. Always obliging, Buckstone took
the place of Jefferson ; but I fancy the fact that he was
manager and lessee of the theatre had something to do
with the concession. The whole town rushed to see
Sothern strut, and stammer, and giggle, and commit
inanities. Nothing could have been funnier than his
performance! The absolute bosh, spoken quite seri-
ously, to be followed occasionally by a short, nervous
laugh, was irresistible. Dundreary overflowed into
Punch, where John Leech depicted him in black and
white, and, on to the bookstalls, where one of Leech's
literary colleagues allowed him, in pamphlet form, to
give his opinions upon *Essays and Reviews*—then the book
of the moment. No one cared for the plot of "Our

American Cousin ;" the play every season used to be altered to suit the requirements of the principal actor. From a comedy of a heavy type—in fact, a domestic drama—it became a roaring farce. It was emphatically a one-part piece, although the Haymarket Company (all of whom were employed in the production) was distinctly a strong one. For instance, there was Mr. Howe (still, in spite of his fourscore years and more, a prominent player), who had a long and responsible part ; next, Mr. Chippendale, as a broken-down drunkard, was immensely applauded in a front scene ; and then, there was Buckstone himself. In the company, too, were Mrs. Herman Vezin, Patty Oliver, and Miss Hill. I am not quite sure whether William Farren was in the cast—I fancy not ; but there were Clarke, Rogers, Coe, and Walter Gordon. And, strange to say, there was not a part in the piece unworthy of acceptance by actors with an established reputation ; and yet Sothern made the entire audience forget everything and everybody in the presence of Dundreary. Subsequently, he played in "Brother Sam" and "David Garrick," both of them, more or less, one-part plays ; but, later on, he had to fall back upon the general support of interesting pieces and a clever stock company. He was, poor fellow, a most amusing companion, and had but one fault—he never knew the proper limits of a practical joke. He sold many a friend at the price of a laugh, and found the transaction sometimes expensive.

Miss Bateman
as
"Leah."

I well remember, as a boy, the *début* of Miss Bateman in "Leah," at the Adelphi. The piece had been advertised in Hebrew; those were the days when mysterious announcements were the rule, and a plain, straightforward *affiche* the exception. The public were invited to "watch this frame" for weeks before anything further appeared to attract their attention. The motive of the play, at a hasty glance, was not an inviting one. Nowadays, when respect is felt everywhere for the Jews, the subject would have had greater attraction for the habitual theatre-goer. Miss Bateman was immediately accepted as a success. She had two great effects—her curse of the hero and her hungering cry for sympathy, in the last act, when she clasped her lover's little daughter in her arms, as, clad in rags, she knelt before her. "Leah" ran for weeks and months at the Adelphi, and was the triumph of the season. Subsequently, Miss Bateman appeared at the Haymarket, to play in a piece by Tom Taylor, called "Mary Warner." Although the impersonation was a fine one, it failed to make the impression created by "Leah." The piece, itself, was the talk of the town for a time, as there was a question of disputed authorship. It was an adaptation from a romance, and dramatist and novelist came to loggerheads. Miss Bateman was the daughter of the lessee of the Lyceum, under whose auspices Sir Henry Irving made his first appearance in the Wellington Street play-house.

Our leading tragedian so frequently appears
Henry Irving in the adaptation of "Le Juif Polonais,"
"The Bells," by the late Leopold Lewis, that it is unnecessary to recall his initial performance. However, I remember the first night very well indeed. There was another version in the field, which was played at the Marylebone during the week of the Lyceum production. If I am not wrong in my dates, it preceded the play in the Strand by some forty-eight hours. It was full of cleverness, written by one of our leading dramatists, and the principal rôle was filled by a gentleman who had made his mark at the A. D. C., at Cambridge, and who was then seeking to adopt the stage as a profession. Had Irving appeared in the Marylebone version, it would have been difficult to say what would have been the result. Without Irving, the play failed to keep the stage. I remember that the story had a strong fascination for me, and, having to write a novel about this time, I introduced the idea of the execution in a dream into the last chapter but one. But my victim was a baronet—of course, a very wicked baronet. When was a gentleman, bearing on his coat-of-arms the Ulster hand, ever virtuous—on the stage or in a three-volume Mudie? In the original, after the death of the Alsatian innkeeper, a doctor gives the tag. "He died of that white wine," observed the medico; "and, you will be glad to hear, suffered no pain!" In poor Leopold Lewis's version this was omitted, and

there were many other alterations (from a stage point of view) for the better. I am afraid the success of "The Bells" was not an unmixed blessing to the adapter. When I first met Leopold Lewis, he was a solicitor in good practice in Size Lane, Queen Victoria Street. He had a large number of clients, and was exceedingly popular. Encouraged by the success of his play, he took it into his head that he was a better dramatist than a lawyer, and gradually retired from the duties of his profession. He wrote several other pieces, one of which, a version of "The Wandering Jew," was fairly fortunate at the Adelphi. The last time I saw him was, not long before his death, when he was walking through the Strand. Although far from well, and certainly not suggesting the prosperity of his earlier days, he was as kindly and as genial as ever. He was full of a new play, that was to take the town by storm; he did not live to see it produced, and I am afraid that, whatever may be its merits, it will never face the footlights.

Report hath it that Mr. Bateman, the then lessee of the Lyceum, was very reluctant to produce "The Bells." Irving, fresh from his comedy successes at the Vaudeville—his Digby Grant and his Chevenix in "Uncle Dick's Darling," had been engaged to play the lighter characters in a *répertoire* which included "The Grasshopper," and "Jingle." However, the hour came, and with it, the man! "The Bells" was an "instantaneous success," and from that day to this Irving has been our leading tragedian.

Half-a-Dozen Hamlets.

A QUARTER of a century ago everybody with a turn for mimicry imagined that he could imitate Charles Kean. The great stage manager (for he was better as a director than an actor) used to talk through his nose as if he were suffering from a chronic cold, and all the amateur entertainer had to do was to follow suit. Charles Kean was the last of the "ultra legitimate" Hamlets, and played the part, I fancy, merely as a concession to tradition. He was infinitely better as Louis XI., and even as Wolsey. *Apropos*, one of my earliest recollections of the play was a glimpse of "behind the scenes" at the Princess's on the first night of the revival of "Henry VIII.," when I remember seeing Charles Kean, with his gorgeous costume as a cardinal carefully held up, addressing the stage carpenters with a vigour more suitable to the army than the church. My friend and fellow member at the Garrick, Mr. Walter Lacy, was the Henry VIII., and Tenniel subsequently chronicled in the pages of *Punch* the success of the revival. The great artist depicted Charles Kean as Wolsey, supporting the Royal Bluebeard as he sank exhausted into the

Cardinal's arms, after his "unprecedented run of 108 nights." In those days for a piece to be represented more than fifty times was of rare occurrence. Charles Kean as Hamlet was entirely inoffensive, and his *mise-en-scène* was admirable. He was the first stage manager of the century to worry about costumes. The piece, as he presented it, was not only interesting to playgoers in general, but to archæologists in particular. And his reading of the noble Dane certainly strengthened the character of the daughter of Polonius—made it more probable. One felt that Ophelia *must* have been mad to have flirted with such a Hamlet.

I remember very well the first appearance of Mr. Fechter. Mr. Fechter (he insisted on the English prefix) in London. He was announced to make his *début* in "Ruy Blas" at the Princess's in an adaptation by Edmund Falconer, the author of "Extremes" and "Peep o' Day"—the latter a piece that, thanks to good scenery, was as popular at the Lyceum as "The Colleen Bawn" at the Adelphi. Immediately the French actor made a success; so great a success that when it was announced that he would play "Hamlet," London accepted the announcement as one of first-rate importance. And when we had seen Mr. Fechter we came to the conclusion—we in the critical stalls—that he had given us a revelation. Until Fechter showed us Hamlet, the general impression

anent the Prince of Denmark was that he was a creature of the imagination—utterly impossible as a living human being. In a moment this idea was abandoned, and, as we looked upon the polished gentleman in his becoming dress, walking the boards as if he were in the precincts of a court, we forgot the green-room and the close proximity of the stage door. We had been told that we should see something new, and certainly our expectation was not disappointed. His “make up” was a novelty. Instead of the raven locks (sometimes curled) of olden days, he wore a flaxen wig; and instead of delivering his words as if they had been learned by heart, spoke them like an ordinary individual. He made a very good point in the reception scene. The King and Queen were departing, accompanied by the court walking in procession. Hamlet, buried in thought, had strolled down, and his path accidentally cut the road that had to be taken by the courtiers. For a second those who had to come, stopped in embarrassment. Hamlet suddenly observed the *contretemps*, and with a smile and bow stepped back and invited the ladies and gentlemen to pass before him. It was not much to do, but it was most effective—it proved that Hamlet, in spite of his musing and declamation, was a well-bred Danish gentleman. Another point was made with the pictures—“look upon this and upon that.” The traditional reading was to point to the pictures hanging on the walls as if the Prince were a

lecturer, and found illustrations ready to hand to point his argument. Fechter wore a miniature of his father round his neck, and seizing a similar miniature of Claudius that the Queen had laid aside, compared the two. This novel business caused any amount of controversy in the papers. Of course the weak point in the performance was the accent. To many it seemed desecration that the grand language of the National Bard should be spoken with a foreign emphasis. And certainly it was a blemish, but the performance in itself was so charming, so natural, so real, that much could be forgiven to the actor whose fault was the outcome of a misfortune. Fechter had been born in London, and it was not by his choice that he had been educated in Paris. However, what was loss to the Londoners was gain to the Parisians. He was the original of "Les Frères Corses," and a number of other pieces popular at the Boulevard theatres in the fifties and the sixties. It is said that Charles Kean, before he produced Boucicault's adaptation at the Princess's, was a frequent visitor when Fechter was playing in Paris in "The Corsican Brothers," and I am reminded that when the Frenchman produced the play in England he reverted to the original sequence of the acts. Charles Kean made what was the second act in Paris the first act in London, and this alteration at the time supplied the burlesque writers with matter for their raillery.

Although Sir H. Irving frequently appears as
Sir Henry Irving. Hamlet and his creation belongs to a later date than those to which I have already referred, it would seem strange to omit his name from my record of random recollections. We had been so prepared by his appearance as Charles I., a part that he had entirely identified with his own personality, that there was nothing to jar upon us in his assumption of another Royal personage. For Irving, as "the Martyr King," was dignity *in excelsis*. His reproof to the "rude gentleman" in attendance upon Cromwell was intensely human. We expected a dignified Hamlet, and we got one. If admirers of Fechter still think that he had no equal, they must at least confess that it is more grateful to the ear to listen to the language of Shakespeare spoken by an English rather than by a foreign tongue. And in connection with "Hamlet" as produced by Fechter and Irving at the Lyceum, it is interesting to note that Ophelia on both occasions was played by a Terry. When Fechter appeared as the Dane, Miss Kate Terry, one of the most delightful actresses that ever trod the stage, was the fair daughter of Polonius. Nowadays we are not allowed to "gush." It is preferable to sneer. But the recollection of Kate Terry is full of pleasant memories. How admirable was she in "The Duke's Motto," in "Henry Dunbar," and in a score of pieces at the Adelphi and the Olympic! And when she gave her hand in marriage to a gentleman

who was devoted to painting and music, how much we regretted the sacrifice to the cause of art, and how greatly we rejoiced at the happy prospect in store for her!—a prospect long since amply realised. And the warmest admirer of the Ophelia of the days of Fechter is that Queen of Comedy and Tragedy, that unapproachable actress that shares with Irving the throne of the English Drama, the Ophelia of to-day, and, I sincerely hope, the Ophelia of many to-morrows.

Leaving out of my list Mr. Barry Sullivan, Mr. Walter Montgomery. whose Hamlet was better known in the provinces than in London, I come to Mr. Walter Montgomery, who made a deep impression in the play scene of the tragedy. He had some entirely new business. He used to drag himself from the feet of Ophelia to the throne of the King, and shout out the last lines of the denunciation in the very face of his enemy. Then, when Claudius fled in alarm, Walter Montgomery used to seat himself triumphantly in the vacant throne. The actor who had come from the antipodes was scarcely known in England before this creation. The success was ephemeral, because poor Montgomery did not live long enough to establish his reputation. Very shortly after his appearance in "Hamlet" he died by his own hand. Still he was popular with his fellow actors, as a testimonial hanging the walls of the Garrick Club fully testifies.

I happened to be in Paris when "Hamlet"
M. Mounet Sully. "par Alexandre Dumas *père*" was played at
the Français. Of course it was impossible
to get a place in the better part of the house, as I had
only arrived on the morning of the performance. So I
took my chance, and managed, by an exercise of much
patience, to find a seat in the highest gallery. It was
an intensely respectable audience, and I must say that
everyone was satisfied with the piece *qua* piece. The
plot was followed with deep interest, and everyone
considered the author, Dumas (Shakespeare was ignored),
extremely clever. M. Mounet Sully was the Prince,
and played the part in a lackadaisical manner that,
considering his physique (he is not exactly a light
weight), was, to an Englishman, distinctly amusing.
Ophelia became an *ingenne*, and Polonius a *père noble*.
And this reminds me of a story that is told about
Dumas and the proprietor of a circus who had com-
missioned him to write a piece for a theatre he had just
taken. Said Alexandre the Great, "I have nothing by
me save 'Hamlet.'" He had only just completed the
adaptation. "'Hamlet,'" returned the circus proprietor,
"a very bad name!" "But it is by Shakespeare,"
explained the playwright. "Oh, that won't do at all,
M. Dumas," grumbled the other, "I want something by
yourself!" The date of the story is given in the forties.
Possibly by this time our lively neighbours are better
informed. But I lay a stress upon the word possibly.

Dramatic Doubles.

The Two
Dromios.

I have not had an opportunity of consulting the preface to "The Comedy of Errors," in the "Henry Irving Shakespeare," and so I am not in a position to say if the piece was written with a view to turning to good account the resemblance to one another of any members of the Bard's Company. That it was frequently produced as a stop gap, may be assumed, as it was played on one occasion in the time of the poet's lifetime at Gray's Inn. In the days of Elizabeth and the First James the art of "making up" was in its infancy; but, on the other hand, the spectators were quite satisfied to take a good deal on trust. It was then unnecessary to have elaborate "sets" costing thousands of pounds, because a placard attached to a curtain stating briefly that this was "a palace interior" or that was "a mountain gorge" was considered by the tolerant spectators as more than sufficient. So, no doubt, our ancestors in the remote past would have accepted the fancied resemblance between the Dromios and the Antipholi on trust, although their exponents may have been as unlike as possible. In more modern days the play has been revived to enable the Brothers

Webb to appear in it. It must be a good twenty years ago that it was given at the Princess' with the talented couple in the dual parts. Certainly the resemblance was remarkable, but I cannot conscientiously say that either comedian was particularly humourous. After one had said to oneself, "Oh, that must be So-and-so or his brother!" the pleasure of the performance practically vanished. George Vining and (I think) J. H. Shore were the two Antipholi, and they obtained a resemblance to one another by wearing long, blond Austrian moustaches and wigs with flowing ringlets of golden hair. For years the Webbs travelled with "The Comedy of Errors," until one of them died, when the other became a prosperous theatrical manager, which (I rejoice to say, in these hard times) he has remained ever since. I fancy he may generally be found in the neighbourhood of Dublin. Whether he has chosen the Irish capital for his headquarters because he and his brother were fond of "double-ing," is for Mr. Burnand and his brother punsters to say—not for me.

"The
Corsican
Brothers." The story of the Vendetta of the Dei Franchi has for nearly half-a-century been popular on the English stage. When Irving revived it for a second time a few years since, the Lyceum was crowded nightly. The gradually ascending ghost was not in the French original. It was the invention of that genius for "practical" effects, Dion Boucicault,

who appeared to be never at a loss to perform the seemingly impossible. He it was who brought a train at full speed and a fire-engine, adequately horsed, upon the boards, to the delight of all beholders. No doubt most of my readers know that the ghost stands on a truck, which is pulled up an inclined plane by stage carpenters. The story goes that once, when a worthy actor called Higgle was the spectral Louis to Fechter's Fabian, a mischievous wag tickled the concealed part of the phantom's legs as the shade ascended from the ground. On that occasion, I am told, the language of the defunct duellist was something awful. Fechter, who had a keen sense of humour, was convulsed with laughter as he sat writing his letter and listening to the stealthy, but distinctly heard, maledictions of "the ghost with the tickled legs" as he was drawn slowly towards him. Until the secret was known it would puzzle people to account for the presence of the two brothers, played by a single artist, appearing together at one and the same time. In the first act Louis has to say, "Brother, avenge me," and this after Fabian has been reading the letter he has been writing, to the audience. This difficulty was overcome by Fabian speaking for the ghost, like a ventriloquist. In the last act, after the surviving brother has killed Chateau Renaud, he is again visited by his "quite contented" relative, who declares, with his hand pointed to Heaven, that they "will meet again"—an assertion, by the way, that

seems to argue that duelling may be accounted merely a venial sin hereafter. As just before the final fall of the curtain the speaker of the last words is the observed of all observers, it is absolutely necessary that the Star should exchange the living for the dead—ceasing to be Fabian to become Louis. So, with his handkerchief to his eyes, Fabian walked behind a broad tree as Fechter or Irving, and emerged from its momentary shelter as someone else. The instant the Star was concealed by the tree he descended a trap, placed a piece of red on his shirt, and came up again (in another place) to deliver the tag as the phantom Louis.

A piece in which an actor has an opportunity
"The
Lyons Mail." of appearing within the space of a couple
of hours as an angel of light and a demon
of darkness is usually greatly appreciated by the person interested. The angelic portion of the evening's entertainment is generally a little colourless, and is only introduced to serve as a foil to the actor's more diabolical moments. "The Lyons Mail" is always popular when Sir Henry Irving appears in it at the Lyceum. And not unnaturally, as his assumption of the part of the drunken murderer gloating over the execution of his innocent double, in the last act, is one of the finest, if not the finest, of his many admirable creations.

And here à propos de bottes I am reminded of a mot of

the late H. J. Byron. For many years the Surrey Theatre was managed by two actors called Shepherd and Creswick, who invariably played in "the piece of the evening." Shepherd was a most admirable man, but had the reputation of being *brusque* in his manner and rather wanting in tact. Creswick was an accomplished and polished gentleman. The latter had to go to Australia for his health. On his return, a friend, announcing his arrival to some brother members gathered together in the Arundel Club, concluded his narrative with the words, "So Creswick has come back quite another man!" "Not Shepherd, I hope," said Byron, with his customary drawl. I give this little anecdote for the benefit of those of my readers who (like Mr. Barlow's pupils) "have not heard it before."

"A Man's
Shadow."

The play with which Mr. Tree may be said to have inaugurated his management of the Haymarket was rather better than the usual dual-part piece. The good young man had something more to do than to appear and look pretty, and there was not too much of the bad fellow. Mr. Tree, who is always better in melodrama or eccentric comedy than in tragedy or romantic plays, was to be preferred as the villain—he was not quite so good as the exemplary character. Years have passed since he played the dual parts, and so my memory may be treacherous; but, if I am not mistaken, he had one fault. A master of the

art of making up, he was rather too anxious to hide his identity as the villain, and it seemed to me that only a very close observer would have thought that the moral young husband and the dram-drinking ne'er-do-well were the same person.

By the way, I am reminded again *à propos de bottes* of a story that is told about "The Bells," that no doubt is as untrue as narratives of the same character. It is said that once, in the provinces, an actor was boasting of having doubled the part of the Inn-keeper with the Lyceum Tragedian. "But I don't remember that it was necessary to double the part," said a bystander, "What did you play?" "I played, sir, the part of that eloquent arm of Irving's that has to put out the candle just before the vision of the trial scene," was the haughty reply.

The
Waterloo
Horse.

I bring this chapter of my recollections to a close with a story of an incident in the Campaign at Astley's, when Wellington used to meet Napoleon Buonaparte nightly, after preliminary "scenes in the circle." Business had been far from good, and the treasury would not run to the engagement of more than one quadruped. Of course, the steed was required for the commanders of the rival armies, so they divided him between them. The gallery were wags in those days (as they are now), and when Wellington appeared riding the charger, in the second

scene, upon which Napoleon had been mounted in the first, there was a shout of, "Where did you get that horse?" The representative of Buonaparte was a man of resource, and determined to account for his proprietary rights in the brute in scene the third. So he appeared on foot to harangue his army, and concluded a most exciting speech with the words: "But what I am most proud of in ye is, that by the prowess of your glorious arms, ye have rescued from the hated thralldom of the blood-thirsty British soldiery my favourite charger, who has on so many occasions carried me—and ye—to victory!" Then he produced the beast amidst thunders of applause, and retained the animal for the rest of the evening.

Among the Singers.

One of my earliest juvenile recollections is
A Grand Cast
at the
Lyceum. “Rigoletto” at the Lyceum, when the company of the Royal Italian Opera, burnt out of Covent Garden, were forced to move nearer the Thames. It was certainly a grand cast. Madame Bosio, one of the sweetest voiced of prima donnas, was the heroine, Nantier Didier was the contralto, Mario the tenor, and Ronconi the Jester. And these four great singers were then in their prime. Sir Michael Costa was the conductor, and the father of the present lessee of Drury Lane was responsible for the production of the opera. And how well it was produced! Mr. Augustus Harris worked a reformation on the stage. In the early part of the century, although the scenery was very good (on looking over some old play-bills at the Garrick Club the other day, I noticed that Clarkson Stanfield was painting nearly everything at Drury Lane in 1827), the acting and *mise-en-scène* were simply contemptible. It was considered *infra dig.* to act, and Braham used to say the most pathetic things in a matter-of-fact tone that, had not custom blunted its incongruity, must have provoked roars

of laughter. Thus, he would come forward and say "The thunder rolls, and I fear my loved is lost for ever." Here he would smooth his ringlets with his hand, and add, as if ordering a chop for dinner, "Indeed I must die, for without Alice to cheer me, life is valueless." Then he would look at the conductor, and sing a ballad. It was Mr. Augustus Harris who was instrumental in altering all this. He made the company act, and his arrangement of stage business was admirable. This wonderful talent is inherited by his son.

Another of my earliest recollections of opera was the appearance of Mr. and Mrs. Sims Reeves at Drury Lane in "The Bohemian Girl." On this occasion Balfe was in the orchestra and conducted. I knew him very well. He was a thorough good-hearted Irishman, with an only son and two daughters. The son had the same Christian name as his father, but was invariably called "Falstaff" in the family circle, because he was born about the time of the production of a lyrical version of "The Merry Wives of Windsor."

When the Pyne and Harrison Company were at Covent Garden, Balfe was the stock composer. I was a devoted admirer of Miss Louisa Pyne, whose voice, until overworked, was simply perfection. The company in those days was composed of Mr. William Harrison (the father of Mr.

Michael
William Balfe

A New English
Opera at
Covent
Garden.

Clifford Harrison, the well-known "reader"); Mr. Santley, the eminent baritone; Mr. Weiss, a rather heavy bass; and Mr. George Honey. Then there was Mr. Lyall, a second tenor, and a most admirable actor; and Miss Susan Pyne, who was a contralto. I remember attending a rehearsal of "Satanella" when all but the principals were dressed for their parts. Mr. Weiss had to sing from an illuminated picture over a mantelpiece as Arimanes, a pretty name for a person with the worst possible reputation, and nothing could be more incongruous than the appearance of the representative of evil-in-the-concrete, wearing a high hat and an Inverness cape and carrying an umbrella. Balfe was in and out of our house very frequently, and as my mother was very musical, he sometimes used to play over the new music to her. As a small boy, little notice was taken of my presence, and thus I had an opportunity of learning one of the chief ballads of the opera, "Sultana Zuleima." Passing one evening the house of the composer, in the neighbourhood of Portman Square, I saw Balfe at work. I stood still, and then started with my shrillest whistle "Sultana Zuleima." The effect was magical. The window was banged open, and out came the composer's head, evidently anxious to spot the man who had either stolen his music or anticipated his ideas. Then I changed the tune to "Bonnie Dundee" (a melody to which "Sultana Zuleina" bore a slight resemblance) and hurriedly departed.

Mr. Santley made his *débüt* in English Opera (after appearing in "Dinorah") in Vincent Wallace's "Lurline," taking the place of a promising baritone called Glover, who died at an exceptionally early age. I am sure my old friend will forgive me for saying that at first as an actor he was a "stick," although his voice was marvellous. He gradually improved until now he is one of the most accomplished actors (when he cares to play) on the stage. William Harrison was always good, especially in comic parts, and when he retired from the opera he thought of taking up the drama. He played for his benefit Charles in the Screen scene of "The School for Scandal," to the Sir Peter of Mr. Samuel Phelps. He was not very good, and was afflicted with what seemed to me to be an attack of stage fright. He laughed long and, indeed, immoderately until the audience were pained to have to see and listen to him. It was his last appearance, poor fellow! as shortly afterwards he died. Mr. Santley subsequently joined a company at Her Majesty's, which included Sims Reeves, Mdme. Lemmens Sherrington, Mdme. Lemaire and George Honey. Here he played with the ladies and gentlemen I have just mentioned in MacFarren's "Robin Hood," which was revived quite recently.

But Mr. Santley returned to the old management at Covent Garden, and subsequently appeared, as we all know, in Italian opera, keeping his English name, and

refusing to give a foreign gloss to it like Cooper, who turned himself (after his return from Italy) into Coporario in the days of James the First, and Campobello, who may (for aught I know to the contrary) have been Campbell in the reign of Victoria.

“ Author, Artist, Doctor, and Player.”

The Hon.
Lewis
Wingfield.

IT seems only a few days since, although it is now four years ago, that I entered the smoking-room of the Garrick Club with my hands full of proofs, and seated myself at the table under the large picture of “St. George and the Dragon,” which Sir John Gilbert had recently presented to the members, when I was greeted with a merry shout of “No corrections here! no corrections here!” It was my old friend Lewis Wingfield who was speaking to me, apparently in the full vigour of life. I had not seen very much of him lately, because he had been away in Australia, and I was delighted to stop my work for a few minutes to have a chat. I am glad I did, for it was my last opportunity. I little thought, as I laughed at his bright, cheery “chaff,” that I was listening to a voice I should never hear again. But so it was; he died a few days later. Poor Wingfield was a kind-hearted, amiable, and accomplished gentleman, with hosts of friends, and, I believe, without a single enemy. Personally, I never met anyone whose acquaintance gave me greater pleasure. Full of anecdote, a traveller who had seen two-thirds of the world,

a doctor who had been through the French Commune, an actor who had once been lessee of the Haymarket Theatre, an artist that had brought back to us the times of the past from the Conquest "up to date," and a novelist, he was one of the most delightful companions imaginable. But he was more than this. The scion of an ancient stock and a thorough man of the world, he was an excellent counsellor and friend. He had his grave moods and his gay. In times of difficulty, in the hour of doubt, whose judgment was so calm and so right as that of the descendant of the Saxon Powerscourts? Accomplished, travelled, genial, and just, without an atom of false pride, he was popular with every class of the community; for he was courteous and kindly all the world over. I never heard him say a really harsh word of anyone; and, when he told me of his quarrels, it was always with a laugh at his own touchiness. For he certainly was very touchy when anyone ventured to interfere with him when he was doing service in the cause of Art.

It was in the green-room of the Haymarket Theatre a long while ago that I first met Lewis Wingfield. It was in the "off season," and I was tied to town by the editorship of a paper, and could not get away to the moors or the seaside. I had dined at the club with a mutual friend, who was, I rather think, the author of the piece of the evening, and

A Revival of
"Ixion."

we called upon Wingfield to discuss some matter of business. The actor-manager was dressed as Minerva, and was taking part in a classical burlesque. It had occurred to him that the players of the time did not know how to realise a goddess in a concrete dramatic form, and so he had become lessee of a West-end theatre in the depth of the Dead Season to show them how to do it. I did not see the actual performance, for I did not go in front; but from what I heard at the time, I do not think it was particularly successful. The season was not a long one, and when my friend left the Haymarket boards it was never to appear again before a paying (or possibly not paying) audience. I was not sorry he abandoned "the profession"; for although, as we all know, the stage nowadays is quite fit for Dukes, Marquises, Earls, and the like, still it must be a little unpleasant to have to run the chance of being hooted by a sixpenny gallery unless you have been brought up to it. Lewis Wingfield was new to the business, and I fancy preferred applause to hooting. He may have got neither at the Haymarket, but he certainly did not obtain the first; at least, so the story goes.

But although Lewis Wingfield did not
"Dressing
Up." appear again, he was passionately fond of
"dressing up." In company with David
James and Thomas Thorne, he was constantly playing
practical jokes with Johnnie Toole. The birthday of

the popular comedian was always a great occasion. Now Lewis would appear as a cabman who claimed an unpaid fare, now as a judge who took an interest in the forensic progress of a promising student at the Bar. And here I am reminded that perhaps this last assumption was the close of the series, for when a heavy grief had fallen upon our dear old friend, J. L. Toole, any incident calculated to recall the sadness was not likely to be repeated. But Lewis Wingfield went farther afield than the houses of his friends. He visited the Derby dressed as a "nigger," and is believed to have written a clever series of articles on "The Life of a Tramp," from personal experiences. He was immensely pleased at being a Mandarin, a title conferred upon him when he went to the Celestial Empire, and frequently wore the costume at fancy-dress balls. I remember his return from the Royal Institute a few years ago, when at one in the morning he and his *alter ego*, Mr. Ashby Sterry, marched into the club wearing the garb of the "Heathen Chinees," to the "admiration" (as Shakespeare would have said) of all beholders. As all the world knows, he was the greatest authority upon costume since the days of Planché.

And here I have to recall two acts of the
"Whyte Tyghe" and the greatest personal kindness. The first was
"Maske of Flowers." when a little piece of mine, called "L. S. D.,"
was played at the Royalty many years ago. In

those distant days I was "a new author," and I am afraid that the tendency was then, as it may be now, "to 'eave 'alf a brick" at a fresh comer. At any rate, my three-act comedy received rather harsh treatment, with a solitary exception. One of the best critics of the hour was "Whyte Tyghe" of the *Globe*, and "Whyte Tyghe" applauded "L. S. D." I did not know that "Whyte Tyghe" was Lewis Wingfield, and as my piece was produced under a *nomme de plume*, Lewis Wingfield did not know that when he praised "Bertie Vyse" he was doing a good turn to an old acquaintance. The second occasion was some years ago, when my friend, in the kindest manner possible, undertook the designing of the costumes for the "Maske of Flowers," the Jacobean revival at Gray's Inn. The task of producing the ancient entertainment had been entrusted to me by my Benchers, and, had it not been for the invaluable assistance of Lewis Wingfield, I should never have been able to perform the task. He designed every dress, and yet, having engagements elsewhere, was not present at the performance. During the summer of 1891, when the "Maske" was revived at the Inner Temple Hall, he took a great interest in it, and was satisfied to learn that those costumes that had disappeared since 1887 had been supplied through the kindness and generosity of our friend in common, Henry Irving. When I told him "that the 'Maske' was dressed from 'The Merchant,'" and asked him,

“Wouldn’t that be all right?” he replied “No;” and added, when my face fell: “I am only joking—it’s the exact period, and we couldn’t do better.”

One of the most exciting episodes in a life
During the
Commune. full of adventure was the incident of the
Commune. Lewis Wingfield, amongst other things, was a surgeon. I know he walked the hospitals, but I am not sure whether he ever took out a diploma. Be this as it may, he was fully qualified to act as a *medico*, and in that capacity he was attached to the ambulance during the Siege of Paris. He was also special correspondent of one of the leading London dailies, and his letters to his journal were simply admirable. He has often described to me the state of affairs during the Commune. He said that English journalists were absolutely safe. The Communal Government was a farce. The ministers used to sit in the Hotel de Ville in the most casual manner imaginable, with people of all sorts coming in and going out unchallenged. Mr. Wingfield and some of his colleagues were anxious to get permission to send their letters by balloon post, and they had to obtain the concession from the Administration. The only difficulty was to find the proper person to sign the authority. At last the minister was run to earth in a neighbouring *café*. It was during the campaign that Mr. Wingfield obtained the skeleton of the gigantic grenadier who was wont to

guard the entrance to his room in his house, which was delightfully situated back to back with the grounds of the Foundling Hospital. But I am afraid my friend was not quite satisfied. He used often to complain to me of the noise of the children at play and the sounds of the perambulating organs.

Of all the many delightful gatherings in The breakfasts at Maida Vale. which it has been my good fortune to take part, I do not remember any that can compare with Lewis Wingfield's Sunday breakfasts. They were given years ago when my friend lived in a charming house at Maida Vale. The studio had once been (I think) a chapel, and Lewis had faced the walls with some beautifully carved wainscot and wonderful tapestry. The saloon was full of armour and all sorts of curios. There was another remarkable room, in the same building, that was hung with Venetian leather of great value. But the company at the breakfasts! Everybody in London worth knowing was present—authors, actors, artists, statesmen, and Society *raconteurs*. The qualifications were very much the same as those supposed to be necessary to gain admission to the Beeksteak Club—"distinguished and a good fellow." Everybody knew his neighbour, and the talk was absolutely delightful. It was said that the gatherings at Moray Lodge in the "bachelor days" were joyful, but they would not have compared with the assemblies

of Maida Vale. And what a genial host was Lewis Wingfield !

Lewis Wingfield was one of the most accomplished men of our time, and in days to come the fact will be universally acknowledged.

Playwright, Actor, and Manager.

Mr. Tree
on the
Modern Stage.

NOT very long ago, thanks to the kind courtesy of the committee of the Playgoers' Club, I had the privilege of being present when my friend, Mr. Beerbohm Tree, lectured on "Some Interesting Fallacies of the Modern Stage." The paper was extremely amusing, and provoked a discussion that was equally diverting. Seemingly, there are two parties amongst those who claim to be supporters of the drama: those who consider a gentleman of the name of Maeterlinck a Belgian Shakespeare, and those who believe him to be a very Belgian Shakespeare indeed, with the accent distinctly on the "very." The lecture (which abounded with such pleasantly alliterative phrases as the "united phalanx of Puritans and Publicans" and "the disciples of Bigotry and Brandy") and the speeches that followed seemed to cause some surprise. Everyone appeared astounded that Mr. Tree could write so well, and gratified beyond measure that the evening was likely to go off without a first-class *À fight-as-you-please stand-up row*.

Actor-
Managers
Past and
Present.

In the course of his remarks Mr. Beerbohm Tree (who admittedly held a brief for the actor-managers) singled out for commendation as benefactors of the stage Messrs. Macready, Charles Kean, Irving, Bancroft, and Hare and although, no doubt, these gentlemen have done in the past, or are doing in the present, yeomen's service in the cause of Art, I cannot help thinking that the lecturer's list might have been considerably extended. When he spoke of Macready and Kean he should not have forgotten Phelps; when he talked of Irving he should have remembered Fechter; and when he praised Bancroft and Hare he should have made reference to the Wigans and the Mathews. Even then the description would have been (in my humble opinion) incomplete without some small acknowledgment of the sources from which the actor-managers drew inspiration—the tragedians from Shakespeare, the comedians from Tom Robertson and Planché. I am sufficiently old-fashioned in my ideas to think that even Buckstone and Webster deserved well of their country. The first wrote any number of dramas himself, and was the means of introducing such sound playwrights as Tom Taylor, Westland Marston, and W. S. Gilbert to the public. Moreover, at the Haymarket a capital school of actors was founded, which has no equal in London (nor in the provinces) at the present day. What better old gentleman than Chippendale, or character-actor than Compton,

or low comedian than Buckstone himself? There yet survives one of the old troupe whose acting is still delightful—Mr. Howe. My friend, Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, in the course of a lecture at the Royal Institution some time since, called attention to the admirable art of this veteran. He claimed for him an air of distinction that is now rarely found upon the boards. Not very long ago I saw Mr. Howe at Toole's Theatre, and I can certainly say that when he was present all went well—he pulled the piece in which he was taking part, so to speak, together. Then there was Miss Amy Sedgwick, and Mrs. Chippendale, and Mrs. Wilkins, and that brightest of *ingenues*, Nelly Moore. And the Kendals—did they not get their polish in “the little theatre in the Haymarket,” when Buckstone was its manager? And how about Lord “Sothern” Dundreary and the Fairy Dramas that made the fame of the author of the “Bab Ballads” before he devoted most of his leisure to the librettos of comic opera? And whoever will forget the cast of the “Overland Route,” when Charles Mathews and his wife, and Compton, Chippendale, and Buckstone were in it? Surely this author-actor-manager deserved a word of recognition at the hands of his successor in the theatre he loved so well?

The First
Night of “The
Wicked
World.”

I was present when Mr. Buckstone had to speak a prologue as “a fairy.” It was the first night of “The Wicked World.” On his appearance, as usual, he was received with shouts

of merriment, for to look upon him was to laugh. One could not help it. Even his voice heard "off" was the signal for a roar. Well, Mr. Buckstone started in the right groove, and the lines ran glibly off his tongue, but when he came to the point of his speech his memory failed him. He "tried back," but without success. Then he looked at the lips of the prompter (for he was nearly stone deaf), and tried to see what that useful official was saying. But it was of no avail, and ultimately he had to leave the lines unspoken. And here I may note that it was said that Mr. Buckstone used to keep his company together because he was accustomed to the movements of their mouths, and could interpret their gestures, and from these movements and gestures take his cues. Thus, although there were most excellent actors in his troupe—those I have already mentioned, and William Farren (for years known as "Young Farren"), Walter Gordon, and others—here and there was a weak brother of the buskin. Still, they played well together, and took infinite pains with their parts.

A Rehearsal
at the
Haymarket.

I remember being present on one occasion when a new piece was being rehearsed. It was an adaptation of one of Sardou's plays, which, originally intended for Sothorn, had been passed on to someone else. The author was a young man who had not got over the nervousness usually associated with a (nearly) first attempt. There were severa

characters on the stage—those unoccupied were seated in the background partaking of 5 o'clock tea. A very worthy gentleman of the name of Braid was one of the unoccupied. I noticed that this worthy gentleman was ill at ease. He did not attempt to attract the attention of the stage manager, knowing possibly that his observations would not be received with the respect he considered to be their due. So he caught the author's eye. That young gentleman, only too anxious to please everyone, stopped the rehearsal to ask him what he wanted. "Sir," said Mr. Braid, "I should not have ventured to make a remark had not you, sir—the author of the piece" (this with a dignified glance at the stage manager)—"had not you, sir, been good enough to address me. But as you *have* addressed me, sir, I would point out to you that I have been doing nothing for quite two minutes. The public will notice that, and be disappointed." The young author expressed regret, but hinted that an important conversation was going on in front, in which Mr. Braid had no concern. "That may be, sir," replied the comedian, courteously; "but if you will allow me, I think I can so arrange matters that the defect may be mended. With your permission, I will hold up my cup and say, 'Another lump of sugar!' And you will find, sir, that the audience will be satisfied." This alteration was made, and subsequently Mr. Braid was heard to observe that nothing could have been better than the stage management!

When I knew Buckstone he had a house
Buckstone off
the Stage. near the Crystal Palace, and it was his delight on November 5 to assemble his friends together on that date for a dance and fireworks. The anniversary of the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot was always a gala day. I do not think my old friend cared very much about the political or theological significance of the fixture, but merely accepted it as an excuse for the letting off of squibs and crackers. He was exceedingly popular in society, and even when his lamentable deafness deprived him of the power of hearing, could always tell a good story admirably. He had a strange voice, that sounded like a gruff undertone mingled with a chuckle. It was not difficult to imitate him—at least so thought scores of amateurs. One night Buckstone was turning out of the Café de l'Europe (a restaurant close to the Haymarket Theatre), when he noticed a drunken man pulling down one of his play bills. He went up to him and threatened him with the police.

“Pleece be hanged!” stammered out the roysterer. “You be hanged, too! stupid old fool, trying to imitate Buckstone! and mind you, not a bit like him!”

Buckstone as
a Man of
Business. Although a good man of business, I am sorry to say that Mr. Buckstone did not leave a fortune behind him. Twenty years ago fortunes were lost, not found, on the boards of a play-house. It is a modern fashion to consider (and find) theatrical

property a paying investment. Perhaps his greatest slice of luck was the discovery of "The American Cousin." The drama was extremely feeble, but Sothern, of course, made it by his admirable fooling as Lord Dundreary. I believe the piece, after it had been purchased by Buckstone from Tom Taylor (who had contracted to supply six plays for a sum sufficient to enable him to purchase the ground upon which he built his house at Lavender Sweep), was allowed to lie untouched for years on the managerial bookshelves. Sothern, who had made a success with it in America, naturally was anxious to appear in London, and tried to sell it (of course, subject to Buckstone's permission) to Mrs. Swanborough, then lessee of the Strand Theatre. "If it's good enough for her, it's good enough for me," said Buckstone, when he learned that the manageress was likely to accept it, and the piece was played for hundreds of nights. Sothern had at first a small salary, which Buckstone, uninvited, doubled, trebled, and at length even quadrupled. But, in spite of Lord Dundreary, sooner or later the Haymarket closed. But from first to last Buckstone's management was a brilliant one, and it seems to me an omission that his name should have been forgotten in the lecture of one who is worthily maintaining that theatre's *prestige*.

At the Sign of the "Red-Hot Poker."

A Couple of
Pantomime
Writers.

THERE were two authors who made a great reputation as writers of pantomimes, and between them they shared London West and East. I knew both. The first was E. L. Blanchard, and the second was Nelson Lee. I met the former for the first time early in the sixties, when we were both members of the Arundel Club, which in those days occupied a corner house at the bottom of Salisbury Street, Strand. Amongst the members were nearly all the dramatists and dramatic critics of the day. It was a very pleasant meeting-place, although perhaps a little late for married men. I myself remember on one occasion, after a first night, discussing theology with Belford the actor, Albury the dramatist, and Joseph Knight the critic, until five o'clock in the morning. But, of course, this was not the programme every night—or, rather, every morning. Over the mantelpiece in the billiard-room appeared the portrait of a dog whose muzzle was turned to the west, and the tradition was that the animal was looking anxiously for the dreaded

approach of the promised Thames Embankment—an undertaking that, in those days, moved slowly. However, in the course of time, the improvement duly made its appearance, swallowed up the premises, and went on. I have not been in the club since its removal to its present quarters in the Adelphi Terrace, and I wonder if the dog is still on the watch. E. L. Blanchard was exceedingly popular, and as his “Diary” has been recently produced by Clement Scott and the late Cecil Howard, I cannot do better than refer my readers to their book for all information. The work will be found intensely interesting to those who are fond of theatrical recollections, and the notes that accompany the biography are carefully compiled. The second writer of pantomimes, Nelson Lee, I met but once. Sydney Blanchard, the essayist, leader-writer, and barrister, and I were brother officers in the same Militia regiment and our battalion trained in the neighbourhood in which the residence of Mr. Lee was situated. Our men behaved very well one year, and the pantomime writer was so pleased at this that, on behalf of the entire population, he wrote to our colonel, thanking him for the good conduct of those under his command. The letter was discussed at mess, and it was decided that a deputation, consisting of Lieutenant Sydney Blanchard and myself (as representatives of the literature of the regiment), should wait upon Mr. Lee to thank him for his courteous communication.

Thus commissioned, my friend and I, in
"When Sword
meets Pen." regimentals, waited upon Mr. Lee. We did
not send in our names, which would have
probably been familiar to him, but merely announced
ourselves as officers from the local Militia. He received
us with great kindness, and evidently regarded us as
warriors accustomed to a life on the tented field. We
did not destroy the illusion, but rather fostered it by
putting on military "side." "Gentlemen," said he,
"no doubt you have never heard of me, but I am a
writer." We replied that we *had* heard of him, but
there was a tone of conventional courtesy in our voices
that was intended to convey the impression that we
spoke with perfunctory politeness. "You soldiers, I
know," he continued, "have not much sympathy for
writing—you prefer the sword to the pen." "Not at
all," returned Blanchard. "Not at all," I echoed, with
a clank of my scabbard. "I think writing doosid
clever." "So do I," added my brother officer, fixing
his eye-glass and smiling at Mr. Lee. "We both think
it doosid clever." "Gentlemen," said Mr. Lee, with a
bow, "I am infinitely obliged to you for your good
opinion of literature. And, as you appear to take an
interest in the matter, I will show you my bureau." He
then conducted us into another room, and, opening a
bookcase, exhibited a number of manuscripts; there
were nearly a hundred. "These," said he, "are my
pantomimes;" and before we could protest he had

taken down one, and, adding that "he would give us an intellectual treat that he was sure we would appreciate," had begun to read it! This was too much! To have to hear the book of an East-end pantomime read to us in cold blood, especially when luncheon was waiting for us in the mess-room, was stronger than we could bear: so we protested. He continued reading, until at last we got up to go. Then he desisted, but with regret. We excused ourselves by saying that our military duties called us away. He saw us to the door, and clasped our hands with great cordiality. "It is our lot to be soldiers," said my friend Sydney, "or we should not have asked you to desist." "Yes," I chimed in, "did not the camp claim us, we certainly would have waited with the greatest pleasure until you reached the tag." "This is most gratifying," said Nelson Lee, "for had I not your assurance to the contrary, I should have imagined that you were two critics from the West, who would see a poor City pantomime writer hanged first before you would listen to his rot!" and then, with a hearty laugh, he told us that he had recognised us the moment we had entered! He had the better of us!

Pantomime
in the
Olden Time.

The old-fashioned pantomime was practically a *ballet d'action*. Some fifty or sixty years ago (long before my time) the Christmas play was performed in dumb show, with the assistance of a chorus here and there. I was looking through the

book of "Mother Goose" the other day, a noted pantomime, and found that there was not a single line of dialogue—anything that had to be explained was managed with a labelled placard. For instance, if a landlord called for his money he would hold up a legend, "I have come for my rent," and the tenant would reply by exhibiting a card inscribed, "I have no cash," and so on. The players in those days were invariably pantomimists, and, after the opening, used to reappear in the second part. They absolutely changed their costume for their drollery in sight of the audience, and as a boy I remember how interested I was in the preparation for the sartorial moulting. The last of the pantomimists *pur et simple* was Tom Matthews, who until his death played in the opening a small part—years after he had ceased to be clown. Of course, no one will forget the Paynes. One of the trio survived until the other day; but in my eyes he was never quite the equal of his father and his brother. Mr. Harry Payne was an excellent clown, but W. H. Payne and Fred Payne were simply admirable as pantomimists. They used to work together. Nothing was funnier than the bustling earnestness of W. H. Payne when he shaved any one. In the slang of the day, although guilty of the absurdest antics, he was "convincing." He seemed to cut off a wrong moustache or put the most incongruous ingredients imaginable in a pie entirely from conscientious motives. Then the Vokes

Family! They were clever, too—especially Miss Rosina and Mr. Fred. Nowadays the Paynes and the Vokes are without successors—in their particular line, be it well understood. Fortunately there is plenty of other kinds of fun which is equally acceptable.

I have already mentioned Tom Matthews, Half-a-Dozen Clowns. who was the successor of Joey Grimaldi, whose portrait may be seen in the Garrick Club. I remember that he could sing “Hot Codlings” at the demand of the gallery. This famous old song is seldom heard now. I fancy it is a little too broad for modern taste. It was really a duet between the singer and the big drum—the instrument kindly supplying a bang for rhymes to such words as “manned,” “thank,” and the like. Then there was Flexmore, an admirable mimic, who made a great name by his imitation of some Spanish ladies who gained celebrity as exponents of their national dances. A little later came Harry Bolleno, who entered into the spirit of “pelt and spill” so heartily that occasionally the supers were heard to utter cries of real complaint. Then there was Forest, who was an excellent tumbler, and who also played very fairly upon the violin and other musical instruments. Until only recently Mr. Harry Payne, who belonged to the old school, reminded me of the departed glories of the harlequinade. But only before the foot-lights—off the stage he was a most dignified and courteous gentleman.

I must not forget that for years the Grecian
^{A Wonderful}
^{Donkey.} in the City Road used to be a famous home
of pantomime. Mr. George Conquest (who
was, when I first met him, "junior" of his name, and
who is now "senior") invented the "Phantom Fight,"
with its trapeze flights, and descents and ascents
through vampire traps. And some of the best comic
actors have come West from the place in which the
money was supposed to vanish, according to the old
song with the accompaniment of "Pop goes the weasel."
Only the other day I had the advantage of a conversa-
tion with one of our best low comedians, who told me
that he had, so to speak, taken his degree in the old
Temple of the Drama that was so prosperous in the
City Road when the century was younger. We talked
of old times, and he then related to me a little story
with which I think I can bring this chapter of my
recollections to an appropriate conclusion. My friend
was acting in a pantomime in which what is known as
a "trick" donkey had a part. The donkey consisted
of two single gentlemen rolled into one. The fore legs
were supplied by one of these individuals, and the hind
legs by the other. Besides walking and dancing, these
human portions of the donkey had to work the ears,
mouth, &c., of the animal. During the run of the
pantomime my friend noticed that there was a constant
altercation going on inside the donkey, which suggested
that the fore legs had fallen out with the hind legs, and

he consequently was not altogether surprised when the latter appealed to him. "Mr. —," began the hind legs, "I think, sir, that you thoroughly understand the etiquette of the profession?" "What there is of it," was the answer. "Well, sir," continued the aggrieved half, "I would ask you, if it's right for the fore legs to work the mouth, ears, and eyes of the animal—which I say it is—isn't it equally the etiquette that the hind legs should work the tail?" I hear that on another occasion, the fore legs being unable to appear, the hind legs at a moment's notice took his place, and filled the new position to admiration. But a substitute had to be found for the hind legs, and unfortunately he proved to be imperfectly acquainted with the part. Thus when the fore legs were executing the most brilliantly conceived dances, the hind legs cautiously tried to follow suit, with imperfect success and evident embarrassment! The general effect from the front was that the donkey, as a whole, was only half educated!

“ Henry VIII.”—Past and Present.

NEARLY the last managerial work of Charles
Charles Kean's
“ Henry VIII.” Kean was the revival of “ Henry VIII.”

I can remember it as a small boy, when I was taken to the Princess's, and had my first glimpse of life behind the scenes. To this incident I have already referred in another place.

A Peep
Behind the
Scenes. It was the glory of the management in Oxford Street that everything was conducted with the greatest possible decorum. Charles Kean was a thorough gentleman in every sense of the word, and his wife was a most admirable lady. I accompanied my father as a treat, and had the honour of receiving a pat on the head from the great tragedian, who, with his Cardinal's robe carefully gathered up and protected from stage dust, was standing with his back to the drop scene, directing the exertions of his stage manager, Mr. J. C. Cathcart, a brother of Mr. Rowley Cathcart, who is known to modern playgoers. How well I can remember the scene, so entirely novel to my boyish eyes! There was Mr. Walter Lacy (still my

friend), who was costumed as Henry VIII., and Miss Heath (subsequently Mrs. Wilson Barrett), who looked a most charming Anne Boleyn. And there were three other ladies, who were subsequently to make their mark upon the stage—one of them (the greatest actress of modern times) I saw watching the performance of her sister, the heroine of the evening, from the stalls not so very long ago. Another of that trio has since been charming all London with her realisation of *une grande dame*. Then there was Ryder as Buckingham, one of the soundest actors that ever lived, who could give any sentiment (it mattered not what its morality or its meaning) in such a manner that it was absolutely sure of provoking a hearty round of applause from the gallery. The papers of the period were full of the attention to detail that induced Mr. Charles Kean to engage so excellent an actor as Mr. John Cooper for the small part of Griffiths, wherein he had merely to record the death of the Cardinal. But Kean showed his wisdom, for this is one of the most responsible characters in the play, and requires a good actor of the old school, who can hold his audience by his power and distinction. In the recent revival Sir Henry Irving followed the lead of his predecessor, and secured Mr. Howe, one of our veterans, for the part. And the two revivals had the same arrangement of the Trial scene—the Cardinals presided on a special throne in the centre of the stage, although the King was sufficiently

gorgeously accommodated. Mr. Charles Kean's stage management was a revelation. I remember that his manifestoes were received with enthusiasm. The production of a play such as “Henry VIII.” or “Macbeth” entailed researches that would have delighted every Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, to say nothing of the members of the Royal Academy and the Incorporated Authors. By the way, as to the authorship of the piece, it seems not impossible that the original book may have been lost in the fire that destroyed the Old Globe Theatre in 1613.

I cannot help fancying that the dressing of
“The Maske
of Shepherds.” “The Maske of Shepherds” was more correct
in the days of Kean than of Irving. I have
a recollection of a *morisco* at the Princess's which was
different to the dance of *flambeaux* at the Lyceum. No
doubt torches were frequently used in these revels, but
the morris dance was particularly appropriate to the
period. Some little while ago the public had a chance
of hearing the quaint old music of “The Maske of
Flowers” at Gray's Inn and the Inner Temple, which
appeared to be a compromise between a jig and a
Gregorian chant. If my memory does not play me
false, Henry was absolutely disguised as a shepherd,
and had to take off his mask to reveal himself. And
here I may note an incident that was unique then, and may
be unique now. My friend, Mr. Walter Lacy, on account

of his importance in the company, was entitled to an annual benefit. In those days it was customary to have a "special bill" for such an occasion. "Henry VIII." was put up for the first year, and when the time came round again for this annual benefit, business was so excellent that this bill was absolutely repeated without the slightest alteration.

The scenery and the processions were *the*
The Entire
Strength of the
Company. feature of the Princess's revival; but still,
the acting of Mr. and Mrs. Kean was
sufficiently good to call forth universal applause. Says a critic of the period: "Here was a spectacle fitted to surprise and delight everybody, even if the whole action were carried on in dumb show, and Mr. Charles Kean might easily have taken the opportunity of putting the real vestments of Cardinal Wolsey on his own shoulders, of endowing Mrs. Kean with the crown of Queen Katherine, and of making the rest of the *dramatis personæ* only so many glittering puppets." Then the critic goes on to say that so far from this being the case, the entire company (with the solitary exception of Mr. Harley, for whom no suitable *rôle* could be found) were included in the bill "in parts far more insignificant than they usually undertake, as if the production was some grand festival which conferred honour on all who took a share in it, however small that share might be." In those days the actor loved his art; and no doubt

walked away with his “four lines” in his pocket, conscious of having glorified Shakespeare, and “personally obliged” Mr. Kean, his manager.

I remember that Cardinal Wolsey had a very gentle appearance, but Mrs. Charles Kean frightened me. She impressed me with the idea that she was a “strong-minded woman,” and I felt quite apprehensive as to the safety of the angels when they appeared to her in her dream. I was alarmed lest she should wake up and give her heavenly visitants “a piece of her mind.” No doubt had I been older I should have recognised her dignity and her pathos. But at my age the denunciatory finger held up threateningly towards the trembling Cardinal was more suggestive of “no pudding for dinner” than anything else.

The Round
of the Theatres
in 1855.

And as I have peeped into a paper dated May 20, 1855 (to wit *Sunday Times* of the period), I may give a glance at “what they were doing at the theatres” in those days. At Covent Garden the “*Trovatore*,” with Viardot, Jenny Ney, Graziani, and Tamberlik; Ballet to follow, with Desplaces, Cerito, and W. H. Payne. Bal Masque at Drury Lane, with opera in immediate contemplation. Opera, too, at the Haymarket, with Sims Reeves. On the following Monday Miss Helen Faucit (Lady Martin) underlined for “*The Lady of Lyons*.” Opera, again, at the Lyceum—“*Crown Diamonds*” in English.

"Paul Pry" at the Adelphi, and Madame Celeste and Mr. Ben Webster at old Sadler's Wells with "The Green Bushes." Burlesque at the Strand; the "Merchant of Venice" at the Surrey for two nights only, to be followed on the third by "Mephistopheles, or Faust and Marguerite," an opera by Herr Meyer Lutz. The greatly respected musical conductor at the Gaiety must indeed be a veteran! Mr. N. T. Hicks ("Bravo Hicks") as Hamlet at the Victoria, and (no doubt to cut out the Princess's) "Henry VIII." at the City of London. But, after Mr. Kean's revival, *the* event of the week was the production of "Still Waters Run Deep" at the Olympic, with Mr. Alfred Wigan, Mr. Emery, and Mr. George Vining in the principal male parts. The critic complains of the leading actress engaged, who is described "as a very useful lady in quiet parts, but not the person to give due prominence to such a character as that of Mrs. Hector Sternhold." Subsequently Mrs. Alfred Wigan accepted the rôle. Speaking of the piece, our critic goes on to say: "It is, moreover, original; for, though the story may be found in Mr. Charles Burnand's novel of 'Le Gendre,' as a piece that has not previously existed in a dramatic form, it is entitled to the distinction of originality." To which noble sentiment I (as a novelist and a dramatist myself) beg to add, "Oh, indeed!"

Sam. Prosser

“Above the Scenes” at Covent Garden.

A SHORT while ago it was my privilege to be present at a lecture delivered by my friend Professor Herkomer, R.A., at the Avenue Theatre, on the subject of “Modern Scenic Effect.” I need scarcely say that the discourse was full of interest. On several occasions I have assisted at the entertainments given at Bushey by the “Admirable Crichton” of Art—a gentleman who is at one and the same time poet, musician, actor, etcher, carver, blacksmith, and painter. I shall never forget two beautiful scenes I saw at the private theatre attached to his academy—the first “The Dawn of Day, near a Wood,” and the second “Early Morning in an English Village of the Middle Ages.” They were simply charming—a revelation. Since then one of our art magazines has devoted much of its space to “Thespian art.” Thus, as “scene painting” is to the fore, I may jot down a few random recollections of what I have known of the wielders of the “pound brush” and the users of “dis-temper.” I may add that I have counted amongst this gay, this kindly fraternity, some very valued friends,

and it costs me a pang of deep regret to reflect that within the last year or two several of them have joined the majority. Beverley, O'Connor, and Morgan are no more, but we still have amongst us Hawes Craven, Grieve, and Caney. Nay, I may include Stacey Marks, for was not the frieze that once appeared above the proscenium at the Gaiety from his pencil? And I fancy there are many who act as hosts in Burlington House on the Saturday before the first Monday in May who could assume the canvas set of dittoes, and turn out most admirable cloths for half the theatres in London if they were put to it. Were not Roberts, Clarkson Stansfield, and many others distinguished scene painters before they reduced the size of their canvases to suit the dimensions of the galleries of the Royal Academy?

Mr. Morgan
at Covent
Garden.

One of the most accomplished men I ever knew was Mr. Matt Morgan, and the first time I met him was in the painting room at Covent Garden. He was hard at work upon the pantomime, and at the time was engaged upon several comic papers. He had contributed the cartoons to *Fun* and *Judy*, and had lately done some really excellent work on a paper called the *Arrow*. This latter was "high-priced"—I fancy sixpence was charged for it—and printed on plate paper. Somehow or other it failed to sell in sufficiently large numbers to secure an adequate circulation, and, after suddenly changing its title to the *Bubble*

collapsed. I recollect it used to advertise that it had “the smallest circulation in the world,” and was generally genial and light-hearted. Mr. Morgan and I got on like “a house on fire,” and did a great deal of work together. He was a wonderfully quick draughtsman, and had immense power. I used to see him frequently at Covent Garden and chat over subjects while he was painting at express-rate speed. We were both engaged on a magazine called the *Britannia*, and I remember that one year wanting an opening figure for his transformation scene, he sought inspiration from the cover! On Boxing Night the *Britannia* had in consequence a magnificent advertisement. And this reminds me that in this very magazine my friend Mr. (now Sir) Douglas Straight and I were writing a sensation novel, called *Through the Fire*, with illustrations by Mr. Morgan, which appeared in monthly numbers under somewhat novel conditions.

How *Through
the Fire* was
Written.

My friend was a young but (I am happy to say) anything rather than a briefless barrister. He was a glutton for literary work, and had contributed a number of articles upon legal subjects when I edited the *Glow-worm*. When I became connected with the *Britannia* he suggested that we should write a romance together. I was quite agreeable, and we started it. I was to look after the town part of the story, while he took the country side. I fancy he had

some idea of working in his school-days' recollections of Harrow. So far so good. At first we got on decently well. We had, more or less, a distinct set of characters apiece, who worked out the plot independently, but yet in harmony. After awhile we were not quite fair to one another. For instance, a country character would become a bore, and then Straight would send him or her up to town to be worked into my part of the story. Now I could not stand this, so whenever there was such an arrival I immediately killed the character off in a railway smash or a carriage accident. Still, it struck me that Straight's idea was a good notion, and worthy of imitation. So when I found a money-lender I had introduced into my part of the story becoming monotonous, I sent him off to Straight's department for change of air. My colleague was quite equal to the occasion. On the arrival of the usurer in the country he took him promptly to a livery-stable keeper, mounted him on a screw, and, sending him across country, broke his neck, with the assistance of a bullfinch and a wire fence! Well, of course this cleared the air to a certain degree; but it reduced the cast, so to speak, of the story, and we had to supply the places of the deceased heroes, heroines, and villains by a second generation. It became necessary for us to keep a pedigree of the persons taking part in the story, so that we should not confuse Angelina's nephew with Edwin's cousin's sister-in-law's brother's son. To make confusion worse confounded

our friend Mr. Morgan, who, as I have already said, was supplying the illustrations to *Through the Fire*, started for Spain on a sketching tour, and finding it difficult to get our copy, sent us blocks with subjects of his own "to write up to." Thus, when I had finished a chapter (say) introducing a graphic account of a duel at daybreak in Rotten Row, a block would come from Mr. Morgan giving a capital notion of a bull-fight in Madrid, and I was expected to make copy and sketch run on all-fours! Then Straight would supply (say) an admirable account of the attempted suicide of the Duke of Loamshire by drinking "supper champagne" at a county ball, and he would be expected to "work in" a spirited sketch of the "arrest of a suspected tobacco smuggler in a cigarette factory at Seville." Of course this was most embarrassing. I generally got over my difficulty by making my characters see Mr. Morgan's pictures in dreams or visions. For instance, say, Gilbert Gunter is slumbering peacefully before his duel. I would get rid of the bull-fight in this fashion:—"The young author slept the sweet calm sleep of innocence and benevolence, although his rest was at times disturbed. Now he would be reading, with boyish glee, his first childish comedy at his mother's knee. Now he would be paying off in the barrack square the company he had commanded so gallantly and so continuously for twenty-seven days in the Militia. Now he would be far away in distant Spain, watching the varying fortunes of

a bull-fight. In this last he would see the excited spectators, &c., &c., and the poor horses, &c., &c., and the toreador, &c., &c. A wonderful scene, indeed, with its &c., &c., &c.!" I forget how Straight got over his pictorial conundrums, but I do know that *Through the Fire* has been waiting for more than twenty years for a conclusion! To this day it remains unfinished!

A Sensation
Scene in the
Covent Garden
Painting Room. I shall never forget a very narrow escape that happened to my friend Mr. Morgan, in the space I have called "above the scenes"

at Covent Garden. The performance was going on below the painting room, and, as usual, there were long open traps in the flooring to allow of the lowering of the various cloths. I was speaking to my friend, who was stepping back to notice the effect of some finishing touches he had been putting to a large canvas, when he suddenly disappeared. There was a silence, and then I heard a voice calling me to help someone up. It came from the artist, who had fallen backwards, and who was lying with his head resting on one part of the boards and his legs on another part, while the remainder of his body was extended over a gaping hole, through which we could see the stage some hundred feet below! Mr. Morgan was perfectly calm, and waited patiently until we were able to rescue him from his extremely perilous position.

I remember that a line in the playbills used Painting-Room
“Ghosts.” always to excite the ire of my clever collaborateur. It was the announcement that the scenery of such and such a piece was by “Mr. Anybody *and talented assistants.*” He declared that this frequently meant that the “talented assistants” did all the work, and “Mr. Anybody” took the entire credit of the result of their labours. Not that he was personally affected by the grievance, because his genius was so great and generally recognised that he invariably used to get full justice done to his merits. On a certain occasion, I remember, *The Times* devoted an entire column to a description of one of his beautiful transformation scenes—for they were indeed beautiful. Mr. Morgan did not depend on Dutch metal and tinfoil for his effects, but upon real downright good painting. He left England many years ago, and died a short time since in America, where he had amassed a decent fortune. He was a delightful companion and a hard-working artist. He had a weakness for dogs and horses, and it is said that he once kept a pack of hounds in a yard in Newman Street, and held a meet at Oxford Circus! When he died America lost the best English draughtsman that ever put the Atlantic between the land of his fathers and the soil of his adoption. I was grieved to hear that he passed away just as he had turned his face eastward, and was coming home.

Why an
"Underlined"
Play was
never
Produced.

I cannot do better than bring this chapter to a conclusion by relating my experiences of scene-painting at the Marylebone Theatre, when a piece written by Mr. J. Palgrave Simpson and myself was underlined for production. My collaborateur was at the time exceptionally busy, and left all matters of detail in my hands. We had been led to take the play to the house because not very long before a piece of Dion Boucicault's had been produced with fair success. But in the interim there had been a change of management, and the authorities we had to deal with—to put it mildly—were slightly impecunious.

The day before the date fixed for our *premiere* arrived, and I duly reported progress. The wardrobe boasted a long velvet cloak, and all the male members of the company—heavy man, juvenile lead, low comedian, and general utility—wanted to wear it. "Toss up," suggested my friend Palgrave, and I explained "that they had." Item No. 2.—Our scenic artist had introduced snow-capped mountains into an Essex landscape, because, he said, he had "lots of white, and meant to get rid of it." My practical friend said, "Change the venue of the play to Switzerland." "But that isn't the worst," I answered. "There is a man in possession who refuses to quit the theatre, and who *will* sit on the stage smoking a pipe and drinking from a pewter pot!" "Well," replied my collaborator, "why shouldn't we write him

in as a detective always on the watch?" But it was useless. The house closed before our play was produced, and consequently our ingenious efforts to avert disaster were certainly as unavailing as they were distinctly well meant.

The Play and the "'Varsity."

My old and valued friend Mr. F. C. Burnand <sup>The Rise of
the "A.D.C."</sup> has given such an admirable and exhaustive description of the rise of the dramatic club in connection with his own University, that it would be an act of presumption to attempt to supplement it. Who has not roared over the account given by the genial Editor of *Punch* of his interview with the Vice-Chancellor, when the distinguished "head" was anxious to learn whether Maddison Morton was or was not a Fellow of Trinity, and whether the histrions proposed playing a comedy by Terence or a tragedy by Shakespeare? And who does not sympathise with Mr. Burnand when he tells us that he felt inclined to give his programme, "Box and Cox," a classical flavour by rendering the title of that celebrated farce in ancient Greek? In spite of the founder of the A.D.C.'s well-intentioned efforts to conciliate the prejudices of the "leaders of Academic thought," the Vice-Chancellor (supported by the opinion of the "heads") was unable to give his sanction to the contemplated performances, and yet five-and-twenty years later the members held their jubilee in the presence of the Prince of Wales, and

amidst the enthusiastic applause of the most dignified representatives of the University! That the institution has been a benefit to the Stage is unquestionable. Many a clever recruit has come to London from what may be termed the Cambridge nursery. It would be invidious to mention individuals, so I will satisfy myself by remarking that some fourth of the programmes of the leading theatres in town at this moment contain names once associated with the A.D.C. That such an admirable organisation shall "live long and prosper" (as Jefferson used to observe in "Rip Van Winkle"), must be the prayer of every well-wisher of the drama.

Recruits from
the
"A.D.C." It is many years since I was at Cambridge, but when I last visited the University I naturally made a call at the A.D.C. My learned and distinguished friend, the present Recorder of London, had recently given up the stage management, and the company of his time had just been broken up—it has since supplied the House of Lords with a Bishop, the Colonies with several Governors, the Bar with many of its ornaments, the Foreign Office with a number of born diplomatists, and the House of Commons with members innumerable. In those distant days the Stage was not quite so "possible" as it is at present, and only one man from the A.D.C. passed from the amateur to the professional boards. This was Mr. Ramsbottom, who, under the *nom de theatre* of "Roland," was

long a valuable member of the companies at Drury Lane, the Strand, and the Adelphi. And it was this gentleman who "created" the rôle of the Burgomaster in Mr. Burnand's version of the "Juif Polonais" — a play that subsequently was adapted by Mr. Leopold Lewis for Henry Irving, at the Lyceum, with the fairly descriptive title of "The Bells." It is to be noted that the A.D.C. is not exclusively an University club, as members of the Garrick are eligible for election. I am not aware of any non-university men, however, claiming the admission. Mr. Burnand, in his *Recollections of the A.D.C.*, declares that he regarded the members of what may be fairly termed (for I think the Athenæum represents the Past rather than the Present) London's leading literary club with profound respect, and no doubt it was this very proper sentiment that obtained for them the valuable privilege.

Amateurs
at
Oxford.

At Oxford, amateur acting, although always popular, has never had quite the success that it has attained at the sister University. There is an "O.A.D.C." at last, but its establishment is modern indeed when compared with the ancient foundation of the "C.A.D.C." About the time when the originator of the latter institution and an Oxford man were coming up to help "the present members of the A.D.C." in performing such pieces as "Faust and the Fair Imogene" (written expressly by Mr. F. C. Burnand for his club),

and, some years later, in Tom Taylor's "Overland Route," the Oxonians were making spasmodic struggles to establish a rival institution. I rather fancy it was called "The Shooting Stars," and if it were, that the stars have since shot into space, leaving but a vague recollection of dramatic careers that once may have been of sufficient brilliancy. However, there was one link between the two Universities in the person of Mr. Quintin Twiss. He went with my elder brother to Christ Church from Westminster, and yet, in spite of being an Oxonian, was still a member of the Cambridge A.D.C.

College Life
on the
Boards.

Leaving amateurs for professionals, the piece that stands out prominently as *the* play that had most to do with the University life of the present century is "Formosa." I saw this marvellous work when it was produced at Drury Lane, but never was present at a performance of its revival, a year or two ago; so my impressions are shadowy, and entirely associated with the original. I recollect that Dion Boucicault, disregarding precedent, brought out his play in August, which was against the canons of managerial art. But his contention was reasonable. He argued: "In August all the London theatres are closed, but London is so enormous a place that there must be sufficient people *at all times* to fill *one* theatre nightly." And he proved he was right; for Drury Lane

during the run of "Formosa" was crowded. I shall never forget the excitement of the audience when the winning crew were seen arriving from under the bridge (if my memory does not play me false, the race in the play was from Mortlake to Putney) amidst the smoke of attendant steamboats. In those days no restrictions were enforced regulating the number of boats, and consequently the "Citizens" used to come tearing along at full speed after the eights in the most admired disorder. Then there was a controversy about the morality of the play in the columns of the Press, and the success of the piece was complete. Pious people used to go to judge for themselves if it were as bad as it was painted. If, in their opinion, it was not, they were indignant at the libel—if it were, they gazed with pained resignation at the wickedness. Then the play, to a certain extent, was copied at other houses. "The Flying Scud," also by Boucicault, did for the Derby what "Formosa" effected for the Boat-race. And this last play was the precursor of a wonderful piece called "The Odds," which, written by (I think) Sefton Parry, was produced at the Holborn. It contained a remarkable sensation scene. There was a steeplechase, and some mounted persons were seen to pop over a brook. Having done this, they (in consequence, probably, of something going wrong with the machinery) popped back again—tails foremost! Of course there were roars of laughter, and the first night of "The Odds" was nearly its last.

"A
Lesson for
Life."

Finally, I remember one of Tom Taylor's dramas, written when "Lord Dundreary" Sothern was attempting to make Londoners forget "Our American Cousin" in the charms of his appearance as a hero of romance. It was called "A Lesson for Life," and the first scene was laid in a man's rooms at Cambridge. My friend, the late John O'Connor, went up and got a sketch of the chambers occupied by Mr. Clarke, the life and soul of the A.D.C. I forget all the incidents of "A Lesson for Life;" but one I distinctly remember—that a hunting undergraduate appeared fresh from chapel, with his "pink" covered by a surplice. Of course, Mr. Tom Taylor knew his subject, as an old Cambridge man, who had enjoyed the additional distinction of being a Fellow of Trinity.

"Boat-race
Night"
at Evans's.

And now, perhaps, it will not be out of place to anticipate what I have written further on about "'Boat-race night' at Evans's" by giving a couple of anecdotes. I have in my possession a couple of letters, both of great interest. In the first I am asked if "I ever heard Ross sing or recite 'Sam 'All?'" "I am not a saint," says my unknown, but esteemed, correspondent, "nor even a County Councillor, but that song used to give me a twinge. Nothing but the singular force and realism of its reciter made its profanity endurable." No, I never heard "Sam 'All" at Evans's, although it has been sung to me by one of

Ross's imitators. The original was before my time, and the time (seemingly) of the entire respectability of Evans's. But I have heard Ross sing, and under the following circumstances. I was present at the Great Mogul Music Hall, in Drury Lane, some twenty years ago, when a "comique" appeared and sung a song about "A poor married man." It failed to please the bulk of the audience, but I traced in the singing signs of immense power. I asked for the name of the singer, and was told it was "Ross of 'Sam 'All' celebrity." Later on I mentioned the matter to Mr. John Hollingshead, and Ross subsequently, for some time, became a member of the Gaiety Company. He played small parts, I am told, with remarkable intelligence. No doubt my friend, Mr. Arthur Cecil, will remember him, for it was during his engagement at the Gaiety that Ross was there.

The second letter deals with many matters of much interest, but talks particularly of the official to whom I have referred in a later chapter of my recollections as the "calculating waiter." My correspondent writes:—"This was his dodge: 'Eighteen pence, 1s. 8d. ;' 'twenty-six pence, sir, 2s. 6d.,' and so on. He had a remarkable hole on his, I think, left temple, made (and I was assured it was true) by a man who, having been choused again and again, warned him, but to no effect, of coming disaster."

So one night, doubtless the worse for liquor, this Johnny armed himself with an empty soda-water bottle, which he carried in his hand behind him, and when the inevitable over-reckoning came, struck him a most fearful blow on the temple, stunning, indeed half-killing, the poor fellow. The unfortunate calculator was taken to an hospital, of which he remained an inmate for a long time."

The Military Behind the Scenes.

Easter
Volunteer
Manœuvres.

ON Easter Sunday a large number of our gallant citizen soldiers spend their holiday in defending the country from possible invasion. They do this by appearing in uniform in some of our garrison towns, and striking terror into the souls of those "intelligent foreigners" who are fortunate enough to see them. On Easter Monday they devote another day of leisure to marching and counter-marching some scores of miles and burning a certain amount of gunpowder. They will blaze away at one another until the various commanding officers, having ascertained that the supply of ammunition is exhausted, will give the word to the buglers to sound "cease firing." All this is most satisfactory, and shows that we are not only "a nation of shopkeepers," but a "people of warriors." It is delightful to remember that, should the hour arrive, we shall be able to repel "the hoof of the ruthless invader," held up to scorn in the ever-to-be-remembered verse of the Poet Bunn. This beautifully-expressed thought no doubt unconsciously stirred the feeling of patriotism in all hearts to their very depths, yet I cannot help fancying that the motive that caused me personally to become a militiaman and an Honorary Member of the Inns of Courts Rifle

Volunteer Corps, was the respect I have ever yielded to "the military" of the world behind the scenes. So it is agreeable to my feelings to jot down a few random recollections of the wars of Astley's and elsewhere as they come back to me in these piping days of peace.

My earliest recollection was "The Battle of the Alma," which was a delightful play.

"The Battle of
the Alma"
at Astley's.

Princes Menschikoff and Gortschakoff were the principal characters, and these illustrious Russians were represented as living in barbarous luxury and having a taste for swallowing tallow candles. The Allied Army was practically commanded (if my memory does not play me false) by a British sailor and a French vivandiere. There was a comic correspondent who "chaffed" Prince Gortschakoff, and was nearly shot in consequence. The final tableau overflowed into the arena, the Russian Cossacks exchanging sword-cuts with some English Dragoons. After a while the Russians dropped from their horses and were supposed to be dead. The audience cheered to the echo "Rule Britannia," and the waving of the Union Jack. They took delight in the red fire with which the performance concluded. Still their cordial approbation was tempered with good-humoured hilarity. About this time there was a piece playing at the Adelphi, in which Miss Woolgar (subsequently Mrs. Alfred Mellon) appeared. It was called

“Zig-Zag,” and the chief feature was a ballet representing the allied fleets. The *coryphées* wore three-masters in full sail as head-dresses and performed a number of evolutions. As a final tableau men dressed as Cossacks, with steamers on their heads, appeared, and, falling on one knee, suggested the sinking of the enemy’s flotilla.

I have a further delightful recollection of “The Siege of Silistria” at the Hippodrome in Paris. This was before the taking of Sebastopol, and Omar Pasha had a great deal to do with the concoction. He was represented as clinging to the French tricolour and getting shot for his trouble by concealed Russian riflemen. Then came the *finale* of the performance, “the entrance of the British Army”—after all the fighting was over! First came six Highlanders in the uniform familiar to those who have seen “L’Anglais pour rire” in the picture shops on the boulevards, next a wooden cannon drawn by a couple of horses, and finally, four little men, in a miscellaneous collection of helmets, riding on as many screws. The French audience did not appear to notice anything incongruous about the display, and received the warriors with much cordiality, especially when the orchestra struck up “God Save the Queen.” I was a small boy at the time, and remember a “Mossu” pointing out the four little men on the screws to me as “veritable Lifgar.”

The Abyssinian
Campaign
in the
Westminster
Road.

Some years later I had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of the *alter ego* of Lord Napier of Magdala at Astley's. His lordship's representative's "get up" had evidently been carefully copied from a photograph in which high boots were particularly noticeable. While the hero of the Abyssinian campaign was on horseback all went well, but the boots coming well above the knees rather impeded his progress when he tried to walk on level ground. However, although he was not good as a pedestrian, he was entirely satisfactory as an orator, and delivered himself of several leading articles of a patriotic character (suitable, let us say, to the columns of some such organ of public opinion as the *Pimlico Pump*) to an audience consisting of a comic Frenchman, a quaint Scotchman, and an unconventional newspaper special. The latter was an Englishman.

Leaving out of the question the admirable dramas at Drury Lane that illustrated the Egyptian and other recent campaigns, I think this was the last of the purely military plays. Astley's after becoming Sanger's and retaining "scenes in the circle" as a feature for a while, has at last disappeared from the list of announcements "under the clock." I often regret the old form of entertainment, which, by the way, I must not forget had a brief revival at Cremorne. I refer of course to a representation in those now nearly-forgotten gardens of the taking of Strasburg, shortly after the conclusion

of the Franco-German War. The French, however, were the besiegers and the Germans the besieged, and the destruction of the doomed city (caused by crackers and other noisy fireworks) was counted a distinct gain to the cause of "la belle France."

There were two pieces, however, of a very
"Ours"
and "War." different class to the military spectacle, and
they were written by the same author. One
of these plays (which it is proper to mention, as they
had to do with soldiers) was a triumph, and the other,
I am sorry to say (for the author was dying at the time,
and success might have meant to him renewed life), a
hopeless failure. I refer to "Ours" and "War," both
written by my dear friend Tom Robertson. It was my
fortune to be present at the first night of each of these
pieces, and the contrast was very marked. "Ours"
was produced at the old Prince of Wales's, in the
Tottenham Court Road, which had been dragged from
the obscurity of a "penny gaff" into the position of *the*
fashionable Theatre of London by Mrs. Bancroft. Miss
Marie Wilton had taken a little play-house with the
appropriate nickname of "The Dust-hole," converted
it into a bijou temple of the drama, and opened it with
a domestic piece and a burlesque by H. J. Byron. She had
played in both items, supported by Johnnie Clarke, who
had been associated with her at the Strand. Then it
had occurred to her that "Society," a play by a new

author, might be successful. When I say "new author" I am wrong, for Tom Robertson had translated many a piece that appeared in Lacy's List before he wrote "Society." The chance came. The piece was played, and played admirably. Johnnie Clarke was splendid as a cad of the time, Mr. John Hare was marvellous as a sleepy nobleman, Dewar was a perfect journalist of the period, Mr. Bancroft was superb as a swell who had exchanged a sword for a pen; and, of course, the manageress herself was simply delightful. The play was a great success, and "Ours" was the second piece of the same series. As the curtain rose on the first act there were croakers who suggested that two consecutive pieces from the same pen would not succeed. But they were mistaken. I shall never forget the enthusiasm that followed the fall of the curtain on the second act. It will be remembered that the regiment to which all the male characters belong (save the Russian Prince) is ordered to the front. The battalion marches away to the music of the band playing "The girl I left behind me" and "God Save the Queen," and these soul-stirring tunes are heard by the audience. How we cheered! How we stealthily used our pocket-handkerchiefs, pretending that the moisture on our cheeks had no connection with our eyes! How proud we were of being Englishmen! And how pleased we were with Tom Robertson! And what a contrast was "War," written by the same author when he was dying. It was produced at the

St. James's, and the principal character was played by a Frenchman, whose physique provoked more merriment than respect. I read the piece the other day when the plays were republished under the editorship of my dead friend's son, and must confess I could find no sufficient cause for failure. The literary work seemed to me excellent—quite excellent. I cannot refrain from quoting a passage from the memoir that accompanies the collected works to which I have referred. It is from the pen of my dear friend's son:—"Robertson had arranged to have the reception of the piece sent to him after each act, but knowing the truth would not possibly be told to him if unsuccessful, and anticipating disaster, he had sent his son to be one of the party occupying the box set aside for his representatives. The next morning and during the daily visit which Tommy paid to his father—Robertson insisting on his boy coming home every day from the neighbouring boarding school for the purpose of seeing him—he drew from him the whole description of the behaviour of the audience and their remarks. After hearing it all, he lay back on his pillow and said with a sigh, 'Ah, Tommy, my boy, they wouldn't have been so hard on me if they could see me now! I shan't trouble them again!'" Poor, dear fellow, he died a few days later! And since I began these recollections "Tommy," too, have passed away. Robertson *pere et fils* are no more!

Yet another recollection. Who could have
Byron as a
War Special. been more amusing than H. J. Bryon as the
special correspondent in "Michael Strogoff"?
When originally produced in Paris, there were two
representatives of the Press in the piece—an English-
man and a Frenchman. The first was an idiot, the
second a clever fellow—but both were heroes. Byron, in
preparing his adaptation, simply reversed the characters,
making the Briton clever and the Gaul a dolt. This
caused the indignation of the Parisian Press, who
declared it to be "unfair." I shall never forget Byron
as the special. He was delightfully cool and amusing.
On the eve of his execution by a savage Khan he asked
the Barbarian if he spelt his title with a "K" or a "C,"
and begged for his signature, which he said he wished
to present to a maiden aunt who kept an album of
autographs in her drawing-room in the Old Kent Road!
How funny Byron was! He knew the value of a good
line to the last grin. He used to speak his joke, get his
roar of merriment, and retire to the back of the stage
until he and the audience were ready for another
repartee! So much for the military drama. It was
an excellent institution, and some day I hope to see it
revived.

A Vanished Playhouse.

A FEW days since I was passing by the site
Her Majesty's
Theatre. of Her Majesty's Theatre, when I noticed
it was still unoccupied. Her Majesty's
Theatre has no successor—the ground is a barren
waste. There has been recently a rumour that a
new opera house is to appear. It may not be out of
place if I jot down a few random recollections of the
spot as I have known it since the last rebuilding.

As luck would have it, I was one of the first
A Fire in
1867. to gather round the old building when it was
said to be on fire. It was my duty (in 1867)
to see a paper “through the press” that was composed
and machined in Great Windmill Street. I was sitting
in a room putting a finishing touch to the pages—
cutting out three lines here and inserting a paragraph
there—when a man dashed in and exclaimed, “Her
Majesty's a-fire!” Then he rushed away. I hastily
brought my work to a conclusion and followed his
example. It was not entirely curiosity that prompted
my movements. It had occurred to me that a friend of
mine, who was the manager of a bank, and in that
capacity the custodian of my poor earnings, had his

business premises in the same block as the theatre; so I hurried to the nearest post-office and sent a wire to his private address, warning him of the danger that was threatening his establishment. Then I made my way to the burning building. Already a crowd had collected. The police were attempting to form a cordon, but had not quite succeeded. I managed to pass them, and a friend of mine, Mr. Thomas Gibson Bowles, who in those distant days had chambers in the same house at the bottom of St. James's Street that contained my own, was equally successful. However, Mr. Bowles had to use the name of a paper to which he was then a frequent contributor in the character of a leader writer. "Press," said he to the constable who would have barred his progress. "What paper?" asked the policeman. "*Morning Post*," was the prompt reply. "Very good, sir," returned the Guardian of the Peace, touching his hat, and he was allowed to pass.

The Burning
of Her
Majesty's
Theatre.

I had taken up my position in front of the Haymarket Theatre, immediately facing the Opera House. There were only some half-dozen people at this point—persons who, like myself, not only enjoyed the favour but the protection of the police. By degrees the flames increased, and the number of engines grew larger and larger. They came from all parts, thundering along and drawing up with a jerk in front of the burning building.

The road between the two theatres was deluged with water and rows of fire-hose. I kept close to the door of the Haymarket—first, to be out of the way; and, secondly, because the heat soon became oppressive. And there was yet another advantage in the situation. I was shielded from the sparks that were flying about in all directions. And in this fiery shower lay the danger to the other buildings. Now and again the firemen turned their hose upon the walls in the neighbourhood of the blazing playhouse, and kept them well drenched with water. We watched the flames crawl up and appear over the colonnade, and then the flagstaff, which stood out in strong relief like a silhouette against the ruby sky, attracted the attention of our little band of excited spectators. The roof fell in with a crash, and we heard a far-away shout, evidently coming from the crowd at the top of the Haymarket beyond the cordon of police. It was now dawn, and I had been watching the flames through the night, so I made up my mind that I would go home when the flagstaff fell. I had to wait a long time, but it went at last—but only to tumble on its side like a broken wand. As I turned my face towards the west, the firemen were mastering what in those days a gentleman who was known as “The Fire King” (because he used to report all the conflagrations for the London papers) was in the habit of referring to as “the devouring element.” But the ruins smouldered for nearly a week.

From the first Her Majesty's revived was
Her Majesty's
Redivivus. comparatively a failure. I have no wish to
refer to the affairs of persons still living, but
I think that many of them would have wished they
had had nothing to do with the luckless building. It
was not opened for some time after it was built, because
I fancy there was some question about the high sum to
be charged for rent. The landlord, a peer and a
musical amateur, of course, was forced to have an eye
to the main chance, like everyone else, and I fancy that
obligation was prejudicial to the chances of the play-
house obtaining a suitable lessee. However, in course
of time it was occupied, and by gentlemen of the
highest respectability, but whether to their own personal
advantage it is not for me to consider. I can only
speak of it as I remember it from the front of the
curtain, although on one occasion I had the pleasure of
appearing behind the scenes. It was not very long
ago, and came to pass as follows.

The theatre had been closed for some time,
A Last
Appearance
on
any Stage. and it was to be reopened for a grand boxing
competition. I think the entertainment was
called an "assault of arms," or something
of that sort. I had received a Special ticket, which was
to admit me to the stage. I went to the theatre at the
advertised hour, and found a platform had been erected,
with ropes complete, just in front of the footlights, and

that there was a row of chairs in the rear. In front of me was the curtain, and beyond I could hear the roar of human voices that reminded me of the gallery boys at Drury Lane on Boxing Night. But the sound was not quite so pleasant, as the roarers seemed to be in "a nasty temper." There was no one on the stage, and I could hear a cavalry band, which occupied the seats in the orchestra, tuning up. The cavalry band started, and for a time the audience were tolerant, probably not only because music has power to calm the savage breast, but because soldiers are always popular with civilians when they are "tootling." But the military after a while grew weary of playing, and there was a clamour for the rise of the curtain. I fancy the delay had been caused by certain illustrious patrons of the noble art having failed to put in an appearance. The gentleman who was acting as manager determined to ring up. The curtain rose, and I saw in front of me an audience of that class of the community that delight in visiting horse-races and, when they have the chance, prize-fights. There was a roar of laughter, and then ironical applause. I looked round me and found that I was the solitary occupant of the stage, and, according to the programme, should have been a competing "colt." As it happened, my "six feet less half an inch" did not exactly answer to the description; hence, no doubt, the furious merriment. Fortunately, my embarrassment was only momentary, as the

champions immediately appeared, and their presence claimed forthwith the undivided attention of the audience. A little after the late Sir John Astley walked on to the stage, and, sitting beside me, explained that he had been detained by the bad weather. Later still we had quite a festive gathering of gallant sportsmen, who sat under banners of various nationalities applauding youths whilst they (the youths) pummelled themselves with new regulation boxing-gloves.

English
Opera and
other
Entertain-
ments.

Still, Her Majesty's, although it has been put to various purposes, has always been intended to be used as an opera house. I remember the "Amber Witch," the "Prairie Flower," "Robin Hood," and many other operas of home growth. The Pyne and Harrison Company were at Covent Garden, and a rival English company was started at Her Majesty's. There were Parepa, and Lemmens-Sherrington, and Sims Reeves, Santley, and George Honey. Then, of course, we had occasional Italian operas, and now and again an invasion from the French. Was it not only a few years since that the great Sarah was dying as Joan of Arc? Further, I have been reminded by my friend Mr. Clement Scott that there were amateurs who used the bijou theatre connected with the establishment. I fancy that he and I both appeared in the same cast when "King John" was played—a cast that was remarkable for having the

mildest representative of "Austria" that it has ever been my good fortune to witness. I, too, have a recollection of playing the Doctor in "Macbeth" when my dear old friend the late Palgrave Simpson was giving his idea of the Thane of Cawdor in a moustache and imperial that looked like a Scotch libel upon Napoleon III., and giving it very badly. However, I made one new point. I had to say, "What a sigh was there." I cut it into two, and politely approaching the somnambulent Lady Macbeth, addressed her with "What?" as if I desired to learn her Majesty's commands. Then I sighed myself at receiving no reply, and observed to the waiting-woman, pointing to my heart, "A sigh was there," as if the sigh were *my* sigh and had nothing whatever to do with Lady Macbeth. It was a new reading, but I question whether it was an improvement. However, it lightened up the sleep-walking scene a bit by getting a laugh.



IN THE AUDITORIUM.



In the Auditorium.

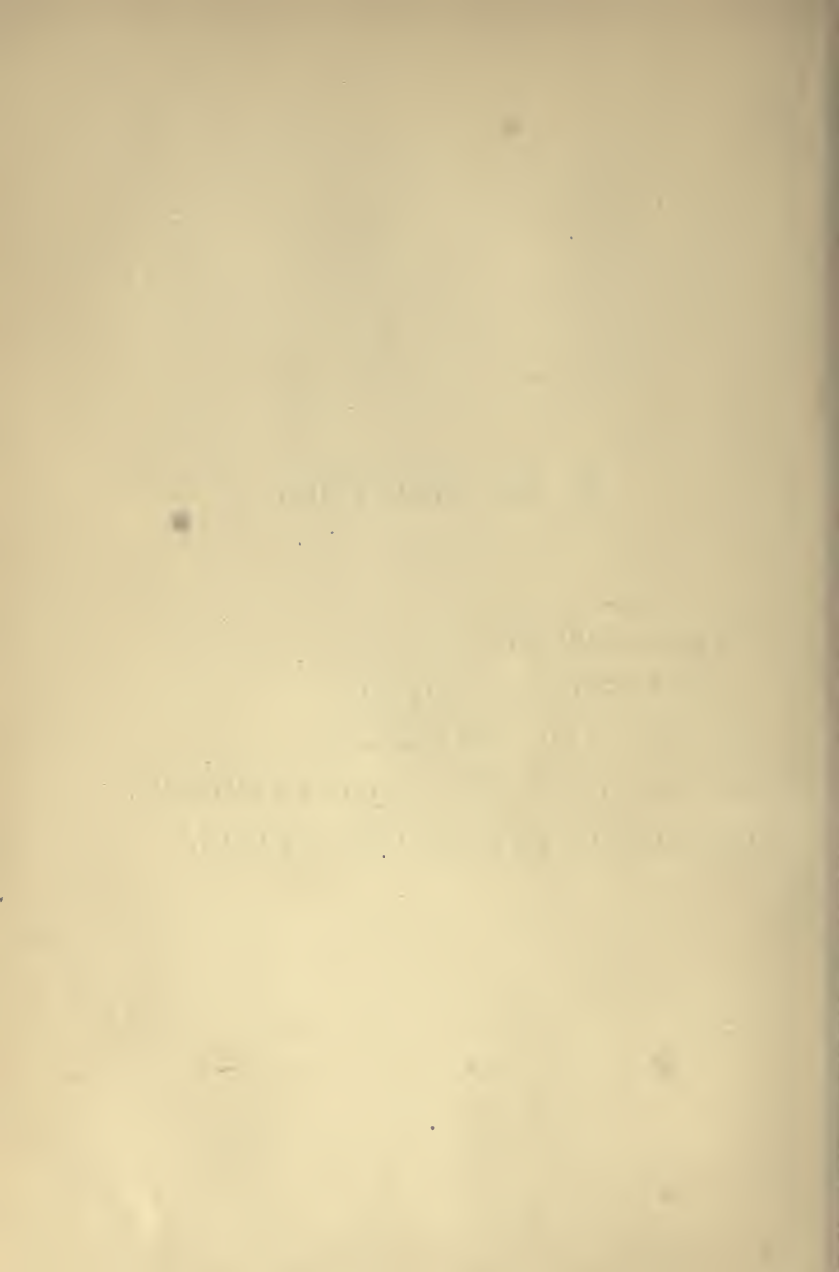
CRITICS—OLD STYLE.

PLEASANTRIES OF THE PIT.

THE *DOYEN* OF THE CRITICS.

ANENT "THE ORDER OF THE DEADHEAD."

THE AUTHOR BEFORE THE CURTAIN.



Critics—Old Style.

New and Old
Hands.

So much has been said and written about the modern drama by "new hands" that it is possible a few recollections of the play by one who was a dramatic critic five-and-twenty years ago, and who still occasionally appears at a First Night in a professional capacity, may be interesting to those with a taste for things theatrical. Without further preface, I drift back into the half-forgotten past.

A First Night
Many Years
Ago.

I am at the Princess's Theatre and the occasion is the production of an adaptation of Charles Reade's "It is Never Too Late to Mend," written by the author of the novel. Amongst those present I recognise several faces that are still familiar to me as belonging to my friends. For in those good old days a quarrel amongst the reviewers was a thing unknown. Certainly one of our number criticised his colleagues in an article in a magazine now defunct, but not in an unkindly spirit—he examined the work rather than the individual. I remember that one whose notices had been somewhat freely handled complained to me that "John" had been a little rough upon him.

"He mentioned me scarcely in terms of praise," said my friend. "Ah, but he was kinder to you than to me," I replied; "he never mentioned me at all!" And a laugh brought the discussion to a fitting close. A quarter of a century ago we did not fear criticism, because we knew that all that would be written about us would be inspired by kindly feeling absolutely free from "envy, malice, and all uncharitableness."

And now let me recall the faces familiar
Mr.
Clement Scott, to me then and familiar to me to-day. First, there was Clement Scott, who even in the sixties was one of the best of our critics. If I am not mistaken, he was still in the War Office, but was thinking of giving up the Civil Service, as the flood of journalistic work was pouring in upon him in such profusion that he felt that soon there would be no time left at the disposal of the Government. A gentleman and a scholar, his articles in those distant days were as polished and as thoughtful as they are at this hour and as they will be (for I know my man) until the end of the chapter. He was entirely honest, and never allowed his private friendships to influence his judgment. I recollect that about this time I myself wrote a play which was produced at one of the West-end theatres. Looking back at it, I am afraid it was not a masterpiece, although even now I regard it with kindly consideration. It received at the hands of the critics

adequate attention. Amongst the notices was one from the pen of Clement Scott, and I can say that, although we were on terms of the most cordial friendliness, the criticism was written in the most judicial spirit—it was the severest the play received. I did not agree with all his observations, and wrote to him pointing out what I considered his errors of judgment. He replied, and gave me reasons for believing that his strictures were deserved. I still wish those reasons had been less excellent, but I cannot help admitting (much as it goes against the grain for a dramatist to make the confession) that he was absolutely right. And I may add that, although we differed at the time, we did not quarrel, for in those days we believed that a man could be sincere without suffering from spleen.

• Other Critics. Then there was Joseph Knight, whose erudition was even at that time sufficiently marked to point him out for the future editorship of *Notes and Queries*. Next came John Hollingshead, a kindly cynic, whose word was as good as his bond. Shortly afterwards he was to become the lessee of the Gaiety, and although his notices in all conscience had been sufficiently independent, his outspokenness never lost him a friend amongst his colleagues, the critics, or the actors and actresses who subsequently became members of his theatrical companies. Then there was W. S. Gilbert, who used

to write amusing skits on the plays for *Fun*, and Frank Burnand, who had accustomed readers of *Punch* to watch for his "Evenings from Home." Then there was Howe, and, I think, Moy Thomas; but I am not quite sure whether he had joined our party. And I also remember a certain individual who used to be called by Tom Archer "the Boy Editor," who, although of a fairly genial temperament, had an awkward habit of getting mixed up with actions for libel. I don't think he was naturally libellous, but he had a way of writing "smart things" without considering their cost. Once, in noticing a new play at the Lyceum, this youthful critic (he was the youngest of the "Press Gang"), after declaring that Somebody was good as Such-a-one, and So-and-so efficient as Such-another, finished the sentence by adding that "the part of Mr. Blank was efficiently spoken by the prompter."

An Action
for Libel in
the Sixties.

Of course such an insult could not be passed over in silence, and a zealous solicitor wrote to that young man's Editor, and asked (on behalf of his client) for redress. But, as ill-luck would have it, that young man and that young man's Editor were one and the same person, and the Editor naturally supported the opinions of his Dramatic Critic. The result was the publication of the solicitor's letter, a noble appeal to "our readers" to believe in "our

honesty of purpose," and—an action for libel! Well, the case came on in due course, and witnesses were called on both sides. As Mr. Serjeant Parry (who was for the plaintiff) observed, there was one undoubted fact—admitted by everyone—that all the world admired the actor "whose part was efficiently spoken by the prompter." The counsel for the defence were, of course, anxious to show an absence of *animus* on the part of the paper, and so the Editor and Dramatic Critic swore in Court that "personally he esteemed Mr. —, and thought him an excellent actor," so did the author of the piece (who was called), so did everyone else. The paper was cast in damages. According to one of the comic papers, it was a question whether the damages should be a farthing or a thousand pounds. At four o'clock one of the jury voted for the former sum; at a quarter past, one of his colleagues for the latter. Ten minutes afterwards the verdict was for forty shillings! However, as this carried with it costs, the conclusion of the matter must, at any rate, have been satisfactory to the solicitor.

Nowadays I do not quite know what would
How the Critics
Treated the
Verdict. have been the result of such a finding, but
in the sixties the entire Press sided with the
young critic, and for weeks his paper was filled with
notices from the pages of his contemporaries com-
plaining of the verdict.

Amongst those faces that I no longer see on
Critics
who have left
the Stage. a First Night is that of John Oxenford, of
the *Times*, the fairest and kindest of critics.

It was very seldom that the representative of Printing House Square spoke a harsh word of a new play, and yet his notice was always excellent. Although he did not blame, he knew when to be sparing of his praise. He usually occupied a box with a couple of friends, and although he was sometimes accused of not giving his entire attention to the piece, the *Times* on the following morning invariably contained the best-written notice of the day. Then there were Leicester, Buckingham, and Tomlins.

A Scene in
the House. And the reference to Tomlins, one of the
finest critics of the century—a man who had
a whole dramatic library at his finger tips,—brings me back to the scene with which I started. It was the First Night of “It is Never Too Late to Mend,” and when we were asked to see Louisa Moore, a charming young actress who was playing the part of Josephs, faint from ill-treatment, Tomlins rose in his place in the stalls, and repudiated the brutal realism of the situation. Tomlins was not accustomed to Ibsen, and hated the sight of cruelty. It was then George Vining, wearing the costume of a convict (he played the part of Tom Robinson), came forward and told the gentlemen of the Press that he considered them under

an obligation to him, because their stalls had been presented to them. I shall never forget Tomlins' dignity as he demanded an immediate apology for the insult that had been offered to his *confrères* and himself. George Vining appealed to the House, but it was against him, and he complied with the old man's indignant request. He had gone too far; he did not mean this nor that. In those days a dramatic critic respected his colleagues, and the great Public supported the Press.

Pleasantries of the Pit.

NOWADAYS an audience on the first night of
"First Night
Wreckers," a new piece are fairly well-behaved. For
months—I may almost say for years—those
wreckers of the play who used to "guy" every dramatic
production from the front row of the pit, with very rare
exceptions, have been conspicuous by their absence.
It may be that it has occurred to them that, after
all, it is poor sport to ruin a work that may have
entailed immense labour, and cost great expense, by a
few feeble witticisms; it may be that they have become
dramatists themselves; it may be that (even after the
abolition of transportation) they may have gone to
Australia; or it may be that they are dead. I do not
think their disappearance will be regretted. The
manager, the company, and the author, will certainly
bless their absence, because their presence meant a
distinct pecuniary loss, and the critics will not com-
plain, because their ill-timed levity, although occa-
sionally amusing, was on the whole a bore.

When Fechter was fulfilling what I fancy
"Monte
Cristo" at must have been his last engagement in London,
the Adelphi. he produced a version of Dumas *père's* master-
piece at the Adelphi. Strange to say, that, although

full of what modern critics would call "dramatic possibilities," the romance in stage form has never been a success. It was in "Monte Cristo" that the French players at Drury Lane years ago were hissed off the boards, and only a short while since, a version, well staged and with an excellent company, produced empty benches at a West End Theatre, accustomed, as a rule, to overflowing audiences. Although the Adelphi version ran well over a hundred nights, I do not think it was of material assistance in filling the managerial coffers. The first night was what is technically known as a "frost," and, although it pulled up later on, it never attained honours represented by placards at the portals of the theatre bearing the legends "stalls full" and "standing room only in the pit." There was certainly one incident on the night of production that caused roars of laughter.

It will be remembered that before Edmund Dantes escapes from the prison of the Chateau d'If, he has a long interview with an Abbé who has discovered the treasures of the island of Monte Cristo. The venerable ecclesiastic reveals the secret of the grotto in which the gold and precious stones are hidden, and then dies. At the Adelphi, of course, Fechter was the sailor hero, but for some reason or other (to the critics unaccountable) the part of the Abbé was given to a Mr. C. J. Smith. Now, because I say "unaccountable" it must not be thought that Smith was a bad actor; on the

contrary, in some rôles he was simply admirable. For instance, in "Rip Van Winkle" he played the silent, hunched-back guide who lured the hero to Katskill Mountains, in a manner that provoked enthusiastic applause. But his pantomime was better than his elocution, although he was the last man in the world to admit the criticism. Consequently, when he was cast for an important speaking part with Fechter, Mr. Smith was in the Seventh Heaven of Delight. He determined to be worthy of the occasion, and when he came to die, made full use of his opportunities. He gasped, and took minutes over every word, and called Fechter to his side to give him drinks of life-restoring water. This had been going on for some time when a man in the pit suddenly rose and "caught the speaker's eye." "If you please, sir," he began, addressing Smith, who, put off his guard, suddenly stopped in the middle of his death scene to hear what his accoster wanted of him. "If you please, sir, will you be *much* longer in your dying?" After this Mr. Smith may be said to have died of laughter—supplied by the audience!

I forget the name of the piece, but it was a
"Put Him in
the Well!" play produced a number of years ago by Miss
Genevieve Ward, who subsequently made
such a great success in "Forget-me-Not." I remember
the plot had to do with gipsy life, and the scene was
laid in Spain. There was a serio-comic villain, an evil-

minded Negro, who early in the evening attracted the hostile attention of the pit. The part was played by an actor who had made his mark in many other characters, and was also a favourite with a London audience, but somehow or other on this occasion he had given offence and the house refused to pardon him. Whenever he appeared, a malicious wag in the pit suggested a manner in which his absence might be permanently secured. For instance, he came in with a robber band armed with swords, daggers, and pistols. They were planning a murder. In the midst of their deliberations, the Wag in the Pit called out: "Gentlemen, will you be so good as to shoot the Nigger!" Later on in the piece some poisoned wine was introduced, with the idea (so far as I can remember) of inducing the hero to partake of the treacherous beverage and die in subsequent tortures. I think the lady lessee was the sirenic hostess, but of this I am not quite sure. At any rate, a female was presiding at the reverse-of-hospitable board. The Negro, who had an interest in the death of the hero, was watching eagerly for the tasting of the fatal draught, when the Wag in the Pit again interposed. "Madame," said he, when there was a pause in the dialogue, "will you please leave the hero alone—if you want to poison anyone, poison the Nigger!"

But perhaps the most cruelly amusing incident of the entire evening was in the last act, when (as usual) Virtue having become triumphant, it was time for Vice

to receive proper punishment. The Negro, of course, could not escape without chastisement. He was again with his band of robbers in front of a cottage, the garden of which contained an old-fashioned well. I believed at first that this well had been introduced more or less on the Crummles'-Tubs system, for it did not seem necessary to the action of the piece; but I subsequently saw reason to reconsider my decision. It was "practicable," and early in the act some one had drawn a glass of real water from it, and had referred to its great depth. Well, the Negro and his (now discontented) band of robbers appeared, and a serious quarrel took place. So far as I remember, the division of the booty that should have been apportioned on joint-stock principles had been improperly distributed. So after he had made a feeble attempt at self-defence, the unfortunate Negro was seized and nearly torn to pieces by his late subordinates. It was then that one of them cried out, "What shall we do with him?" The Wag in the Pit, ever on the look-out for an opening, immediately replied with a suggestion, "Why not put him in the well?" As luck would have it, this was the very fate that the author had reserved for him, and, to the huge delight of the house generally, the band of robbers *did* put him in the well, amidst thunders of sympathetic applause. My friend Mr. Arthur Cecil was my next stall neighbour on the occasion, and we had a very pleasant evening. But for all that, we pitied the unfortunate author.

A Play
Without
Words.

The pit deals in sarcasm, the gallery prefers noise. One uses the rapier, the other the bludgeon. *Apropos* of the games of the gods, I may relate the following:—About twenty years ago, when pantomime reigned at the Princess's (the lessee was Mr. Augustus Harris, the father of the present Knight), it was the fashion to have "curtain-risers" in front of the piece of the evening. In those days the company was a most excellent one. There were Louise Keeley and Kate Howard, J. G. Shore, Saker and Garden, supported by an admirable *corps de ballet*. One of the features, I remember, in the pantomime of a quarter of century ago was a dance of riflemen in honour of the Volunteer movement, then in its infancy. So all the world used to throng the Princess's on Boxing Night, as one of the great functions of the theatrical season. One Christmas, however, the Gallery Gods resented the curtain riser, and insisted upon having the play cut out. I remember it was called "Ernestine," but I have not the faintest notion what it was all about. It was acted nearly entirely in dumb-show. Now and again there would be a pause in the row, and then one would catch a few words of the dialogue. The effect was ludicrous in the extreme. It was a romantic drama, and the characters *en bloc* seemed to be preaching at one another. All that I can recollect of the spoken part is "But the necklace is yours, darling;" "No, father, for it was bought for my mother;" and "Now, Henry, we are

lost indeed unless we catch the midnight boat." The actors expressed delight and despair, joy and sorrow; but we heard not a syllable. The noise was deafening until the overture commenced for the pantomime, and from that moment to the playing of the National Anthem the gallery served as a model of propriety. The Gods had come for (I think) "Jack the Giant Killer," and they wanted no one else.

The *Doyen* of the Critics.

I HAVE before me an excellent little work,
The Book of
an Old Friend. called *Thirty Years at the Play*, written
by Clement Scott, and inscribed in the
author's handwriting to "my dear old friend." It is
in my possession, and it has come to me at first-
hand. And it is a pleasure to me to know that in
Clement Scott I have a dear old friend, for there is
no man living whose esteem I hold in so great regard.
It is dedicated to another dear old friend, Joseph
Knight, and he, and Clement Scott and I, and some
half-dozen others, were the dramatic critics of the
sixties and the seventies (more than twenty years ago).
In an earlier chapter I had the honour to mention the
names of a few of my colleagues, and the list included
Knight and Scott, and not one of our set has ever had,
and I hope never will have, a word of difference the one
with the others. We were friends then, and we are
friends now, and, take it all round, I do not think we
were bad fellows. I know that we did our duty fearlessly,
and said what we believed to be the case. We were
not influenced by the blandishments of authors, actors,
and managers. For we did not exactly depend upon
"the profession" for recognition. Joseph Knight is,

and was, a barrister. Clement Scott was in the War Office, and so was Tom Hood, and so was Norman Lockyer, F.R.S., F.S.A., who is now known as the "Eminent Astronomer." I myself love the old "W.O.," because I, too, for a year or so, was on the strength of the department, and had Scott and Hood and Marzials and Lockyer as my colleagues. Then Bendall was in the Paymaster-General's Office, and Godfrey, the dramatist, was at the Admiralty, and W. S. Gilbert was at Somerset House, and Edmund Yates at the Post Office, and Frank Marshall at the Audit Office, and T. Gibson Bowles at the Legacy Duty Office, and Freddy Clay and Charley Stephenson at the Treasury. Then Tom Taylor and Anthony Trollope were also members of the Civil Service. About twenty-five years ago we were young men about town, with the *entrée* to Society that the Civil Service gave us, and we did not care a jot for "chicken and champagne," and were pleased to be friendly with "the profession," but not to accept patronage. So when I read, as I do sometimes read, attacks upon the critics of the earlier generation, I cannot help smiling a smile, not entirely free from contempt, for the rubbish I peruse. We are not fossils even now; in fact, we are said to be in "the prime of life"; but a quarter of a century ago we were all of us young, and some of us beautiful, and we would see "chicken and champagne" and "green-room chatter" further first before we left the club and the

salon to enjoy their charms. I was present a short while ago at the performance of an amusing play, in which, after an amateur author had described his piece to a friend, that friend observed, "What rot!" and when I read that the critics of the past were influenced by "supper and actors," I observe, with a recollection of my school days, "What cheek!"

Mr.
Clement Scott and I were colleagues in the War Office, but
as an Actor.

one of my earliest recollections of my friend is connected with the green-room of St. George's Hall, Langham Place. I don't know exactly how it came that we were engaged to take part in an amateur performance, but so it was. We had to appear as "guests" in a ball room, and therein had to play a game of *écarté*. I have not the faintest notion what the piece was about, but I rather think it was written by a solicitor. Mr. Scott and I had been coached by the author to "play as naturally as we could," and we sat down at a table with the determination to carry out the instructions of our coach to the letter. The author-solicitor was standing in a long disguise cloak, concealing his features, in one corner, and the late Corney Grain (who was then a practising barrister) was singing a sentimental song in another. The latter could not understand the cause of some tittering amongst the audience. I am afraid I was responsible for a part of

it. When we began to play, the idea entered my head that I should lose. So I lost all I had, inclusive of my watch, cigar-case, and *gibus*. At length the gambling fit was so strong upon me that I took off my coat and played for that, and Mr. Scott winning it, he, like a true artist, marched off with the spoils of victory. Naturally this caused some merriment, which was not lessened when the author-solicitor threw off his disguise cloak, and exclaimed, without any apparent reason, "My Mother!" Curtain!

I have, of course, sat out many first nights
A Memorable
First Night at
the Globe. at which Mr. Scott was also present. He describes one in his book, however, which I missed, I regret to say, and it was perhaps the funniest on record. I refer, of course to "Ecarté" at the Globe. The noble author is still living, and is one of the best and kindest of men. He subsequently did some excellent dramatic work in an adaptation of the "Danicheff" produced at the St. James'. The chaff amongst the author's friends was that, unable to get anyone to listen to "Ecarté," he used to read his play to his solicitor, to see that it did not contain libellous matter! It really was not half a bad piece, and the incident of the real champagne, so amusingly detailed by my friend Mr. Scott, had a great deal to do with its failure. Nothing funnier than some of the "gag" resulting from real wine at a picnic could ever

have been heard on the stage. I remember that the drop scene at the Globe in those days represented Shakespeare and Kate Hathaway at Stratford. It was painted by an artist friend of mine (who assisted either Grieve or Telbin) and I had once to see him on business while the canvas was in course of covering. He insisted that I should join in the work, and for years the Globe drop scene used to boast of a sort of cabbage growing on the top of a pole. It was my attempt to paint a dwarf oak! There was another first night at the Globe to which I do not think Mr. Scott has referred—I mean "Oriana," by James Albury and F. Clay. It really was an excellent production—full of poetry and good music. And yet it failed to please. The story goes that H. J. Montague, having to sing in it, ear-trumpets as well as opera glasses were let for the evening! Poor Montague had certainly rather a feeble voice—it was very sweet but very small.

A Recollection
of
H. J. Montague. The first time I met Mr. H. J. Montague he was coaching a number of amateurs, of whom I was one. I fancy the company included Mrs. Milner Gibson, Miss Barker, Messrs. Palgrave Simpson, Herman Merivale, Frank Marshall, and Sir Charles Young. How well I remember "A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing," with Clarkson, the eminent wig-maker, in attendance, asking "who we were," and ready to "make us up" either as villains or

as saints, at a moment's notice! The name of Clarkson is still well to the fore, but my old friend, I am sorry to say, is no more. But to return to Montague. Shortly after this he made the acquaintance of Dion Boucicault, who, as Mr. Scott recounts, gave him a small part in "Jeannie Deans" at Astley's, or the "Royal Westminster Theatre," as the clever author of "London Assurance" insisted upon calling the old house, possibly with a view to persuading the public that the temple of the drama was situated in the West End. I knew Montague very well when he was at the Prince of Wales and at the Vaudeville, and I recall him as I saw him at some amateur theatricals at Cavendish Square, when the late Countess of Fife was the hostess. I had been playing with Quintin Twiss, Arthur Blunt, and Charley Stephenson, and I remember poor "Harry" at supper complimenting us all round upon our excellent acting. Not very long after the failure of "Oriana" he went to America, after playing in "The Frozen Deep" at the Olympic. How good he was in the last act, when, carried in apparently dying, he used to revive at the sight of the woman he loved! Poor Montague! His fate was a sad one!

I see that Mr. Scott refers to the admirable "Diplomacy" version of "Dora" produced by himself and Mr. Stephenson at the Prince of Wales's Theatre. He quotes Mr Brander Matthews, who, it

seems, appears to consider "the play disfigured by the needless thrusting in of Jingoism." Now this criticism of Mr. Brander Matthews amuses me, because it savours of the "cheek" to which I have referred a little earlier in this chapter. It is unnecessary to quote Mr. Scott's argument in favour of the introduction. As a matter of fact, the war flavour imparted to the savoury dish made the *plat* complete—simply perfect. And no two better men could have undertaken the task. Mr. Scott, a War Office man (the son of a clergyman eminent as a *Saturday Reviewer*, and a scholar) and a public schoolboy, was intimately acquainted with the ways of the "W.O." And so was his colleague. Although belonging to the Treasury, Mr. Stephenson had come to the War Office as Private Secretary to the Earl de Grey and Ripon (now Marquis of that ilk), and knew the ropes thoroughly. Mr. Ernest Clay Kerr Seymour (brother of Freddy, then Private Secretary to Mr. Glynn, Patronage Secretary) was at the Embassy in Paris, and the scene in the last act of "Diplomacy," with its photographs of past Members of Legation, was an exact copy of an apartment in the mansion in the Rue Faubourg St. Honoré. The local colouring was lifelike, and so it should have been, for Stephenson and Scott were friends of Evelyn Ashley, Calcraft, Phil Currie, MonteCorry, Rivers Wilson, Charlie Freemantle, and the rest of the young Civil Servants of the Crown of twenty years ago. Many of them were contributors

to the *Owl*, started by Borthwick, the present Lord Glenesk of the *Morning Post*. Nowadays we have all grown a trifle older. One of the old set was but recently Deputy Master of the Mint, another has been practically Dictator of Egypt, a third is in the Ministry, a fourth has been created a peer, a fifth is one of the most successful of our Ambassadors, and my friend Scott himself is *doyen* of the dramatic critics of the great metropolis.

Anent the "Order of the Deadhead."

"Papering"
the House.

WHEN the weather has been unseasonable during the past few years, at many of our West-end theatres I have heard that it has been found necessary to "paper the house" to secure the semblance of a fairly good attendance. And this being so, it may not be out of place to jot down a few random recollections concerning audiences who are exempted from paying the customary prices of admission. At one time there were thousands of persons ready at a moment's notice to cadge for an order, but I hope and believe that the number has of late years been decreasing by "leaps and bounds." People are beginning at last to understand that there is not much difference between asking a manager for a private box and asking him for a couple of guineas, and as they would not solicit the latter, they are shrinking from demanding the former.

Varieties
of the
"Deadhead
Microbe."

In the dark ages of sectarian prejudices the Jesuits were supposed to be not only omnipotent but ubiquitous. The late Mr. Whalley, M.P., I have been told, harboured suspicions in his head that one of his tradespeople was the

General of the Order in disguise, and firmly believed that many of the Italian organ-men had a right to write "S. J." after their names as Members of the dreaded Society. Nowadays people are better informed, and recognise the Jesuits as merely clergymen of exceptional intellectual attainments. They are no longer supposed to belong to every class of the community. But there is another body of persons which exactly answers the reputed characteristics of the followers of St. Ignatius Loyola—I refer to what may be called "The Brazen Society of Deadheads." You meet them everywhere: they are indeed ubiquitous.

Not very long ago I was dining in the house of a reputed millionaire. The table groaned with plate, the *menu* was the work of a *cordon bleu*, the wines belonged to the best vintages, the walls of the spacious *salle à manger* were hung with priceless pictures. As I was leaving, my host said: "By the way, as you know all the managers, do you think you could get me a private box for the — Theatre?" I returned that, if he sent to the *bureau* of the house to which he referred, he could select his own box, and that there was no fee for booking. And no doubt this little speech has lost me many a heavy dinner that was looming for me in the future. Well, it cannot be helped. I am consoled by the thought that his stock of Magnums of Perrier Jouet of '74 is exhausted. And even were it not, is the vintage *now* quite in its perfection?

Again, it was only a short time ago that I was having my hair cut, when the talented individual who scarified my scalp with a brush worked by a seemingly powerful steam-engine whispered in my ear: "Beg pardon, sir, but as you write for the papers, would it be taking too great a liberty to ask you to give me a couple of orders for the play?"

Once more, some years ago, I heard of a barrister connected with the Press, whose duty it was to go through the "proof" of a well-known detective who was then on the trail of a suspected murderer. "Yes, sir," said his witness, "I and my mate have been watching the house in Wych Street continuously for the last six weeks, and, mark my words, we shall have him before long. And that reminds me, sir, that as you write for the Press, I hope you will forgive me for saying that I would esteem it a great favour and honour if you would kindly get me, sir, a pass or two to the Olympic."

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It matters not whither you went, or to whom you spoke, you found the "deadhead" everywhere.

The Coldest
Audience
on Record.

In the days of old a deadhead of the middle classes could be easily recognised by a red opera cloak. That garment, like charity, used to conceal a number of imperfections. The afternoon toilette of Extremely West Kensington and Exceptionally Lower Tooting peeped beneath its

scanty folds. Nowadays "orders" dress better, and have to be recognised by their demeanour. But with this assistance it is easy enough to spot them. Your seasoned deadhead never applauds, never seems pleased, and frequently slumbers. Perhaps he or she is seen at his or her best at an amateur performance, organised by some cheap Lady Bountiful, who is working her hardest to support some such charity as a Reformatory for Brain Affected Monkeys. The deadhead, knowing that he or she is watched by the organiser of the entertainment, who has presented him or her with the voucher, he or she is careful to applaud the performances in general, and a rather feeble imitation of, say, Henry Irving (kindly provided by a nephew of the manageress) in particular. But, as a rule, your deadhead (of the common or cadging kind) is a dreary, stolid creature, who neither applauds, nor laughs, nor cries. He or she merely fills a stall for which he or she should, and very frequently could, have paid half-a-guinea, but which has been obtained by him or her "free gratis and for nothing!"

Playing to a
Double-Dutied
Orchestra.

In spite of the coldness of the people who come in with orders, some actors cannot play without the semblance of an audience, and even the presence of deadheads is better than an entirely empty house. Many years ago, I remember seeing a masterpiece of Shakespeare played at the

Opera Comique to an audience that was so scanty that the orchestra, at the direction of the manager, left their places in the well of the auditorium to reappear in the front row of the dress circle ! The manager himself joined them in the second row, wearing his hat ! It was, indeed, a strange performance. The company was excellent. It included a married couple, who are now (and were then) at the top of the theatrical tree, the very best character-actor in London, and a low comedian of the first rank. And yet the theatre was absolutely empty !

What an
Acting-Manager
has to do.

It is one of the most responsible duties of the acting-manager to distribute orders in the proper quarters. As a dramatist and critic of a good many years' standing, I never get an order sent me, for the all-sufficient reason that I can have them for the asking. An experienced gentleman in charge of the front of the house would know that if I got "paper" sent me unsolicited—except for some very special occasion, such as an important First Night—I should jump to the conclusion that the theatre was on its last legs—and talk ! Fancy sending an author-critic, sick to death of new plays, places for a tottering piece that he has already seen and doesn't want to see again ! The best acting-manager I ever knew was Mr. Humphrey Barnet, who, before the days of Sir Henry Irving and Mr. Herbert-Basing, was

connected with the Lyceum and the Princess's. It was said that Mr. Barnet had an entire audience waiting to come at his beck and call nightly. He had people ready to "paper" the house at his appeal from the last row of the gallery up to the best seat in the Queen's box! They had all been promised places—if Mr. Barnett had room for them.

A very dear and esteemed friend of mine ^{Concerning} "The Little E." calls my attention to the fact that there is an admirable sketch of Mr. English in the best work of humour the century has produced—I refer, of course, to Mr. Burnand's *Happy Thoughts*. In the person of a gentleman, who was in the habit of giving to important nouns Christian names, the popular editor of *Punch* reproduced the characteristics of the champion dramatic agent to perfection. And this reminds me that when a piece of mine was running at the Royalty, Mr. English after a while had to augment the audience in the customary fashion, and with this anecdote I think I can bring my notes on "deadheads" to an appropriate conclusion.

The play had been well received by the ^{"Peter Paper"} Press, and acted for a very considerable time at the Play. to crowded audiences. I was, therefore, rather surprised when (the piece still seeming to be largely drawing) I heard that the "Notices were up,"

and the season was consequently within measurable distance of its end. I spoke to Mr. English on the subject, and he explained that "Little Master Exes" had now become too heavy for the managers to bear. Small theatres are always extremely costly, as they require precisely the same companies, the same advertising, and the same bands as larger houses, and yet can only seat about half the audiences that the larger houses can accommodate. Mr. English told me that London was going out of town, and that although every one was pleased with the piece, which had done very well at first, it was now being played at a loss. "But," said I, "the house is full every night." "All right," replied Mr. English. "Come and see little Alfy Audience on Monday. I will stop all paper for that day and you shall see the result." Next evening I looked in at the Royalty. A splendid house. People were coming away, unable to obtain admission. I called Mr. English's attention to this fact. "They are turning away money from the doors," I observed. "No," he replied. "Not Master Money, but little Oscar Orders!" On the Monday I again presented myself, and, to my indignation, was refused admission. "The free list is entirely suspended, sir," said the grinning check-taker. At this moment Mr. English appeared, and I complained of the indignity to which I had been subjected. "Not at all," he said; "we are absolutely admitting no free admissions to the theatre

to-night. Now you will see the condition of the house for yourself." We entered the auditorium—all the private boxes were empty. For the rest there were a dozen people in the gallery, as many in the pit, one in the dress circle, three in the upper boxes, and two men (who had evidently dropped in from a club) in the stalls. "You see," said Mr. English, "we cannot do without the help of poor little Peter Paper!"

Within a month of the suspension of the Free List the Royalty was again to let.

The Author Before the Curtain.

I HAVE noticed that the laudatory before-
The Author as Critic. the-curtain references to his own piece,
and the performers who took part in it, by
an author, have been rather sharply commented upon
in the pages of the Press, whenever such references
have occurred. I think this a little hard; for why
should not an author have an opinion, like everyone
else? The criticisms have, however, recalled to
recollection a case within my own experience, when a
verdict was placed cut and dried before the audience
at the fall of the curtain on the production of a new
piece, for their acceptance or rejection, with (on the
whole) satisfactory results. Perhaps it may be worth
while to jot down the circumstances that led up to this
incident, as they are not unamusing—and possibly may
be unique.

A relative, very near and dear to me, had
The Theatre of the Spirits. written a burlesque for a theatre recently
erected in London, and being ill abroad, and
consequently quite unable to look after it himself
asked me to do what was necessary to “see it safely out
for him.” Of course, I was only too glad in these
circumstances to try to do my very best. I made a few

enquiries about the house itself, and was told that it owed its existence to spiritualism. The story I heard (possibly originated by my old friend, Ben Trovato) was as follows. There was a certain capitalist who implicitly followed the dictates of a table when that usually useful article of furniture was presided over by a certain medium. By the advice of the table this capitalist first acquired a piece of ground, then built a theatre on it, next appointed the medium directress, next engaged an opera company, and finally hurriedly dismissed the acting manager because the directress had had a row with him!

From Opera
to
Burlesque.

When I came on the scene the "opera company stage" had just been reached. The opera had not succeeded in pleasing the public, even with the supplementary attraction of the directress (who could not sing) appearing as a fairy queen (or something of that kind) in gorgeous apparel—a character that had been worked obligingly by the author into the plot. Perhaps the association of ideas of fairyland with burlesque caused the directress to appeal to my relative to provide her with the necessary entertainment. I must confess that I found the lady extremely good natured. She seemed to be under the impression that the play could be made a triumphant success if she only achieved the (to her) somewhat difficult task of dancing a breakdown. She was con-

tinually practising this agreeable measure at rehearsal, in a costume which, although admirably adapted for the purpose to which it was devoted, looked a little incongruous when contrasted with the ordinary walking dresses of the rest of the company. When the time came for the breakdown, she used to commence dancing with an air of anxiety that was absolutely painful for bystanders to witness, and having got through the steps with considerable difficulty, she would heave a sigh of intense relief and glance round smilingly, as if in search of the congratulations to which she justly felt she was entitled as a reward for her almost superhuman exertions. I had a great admiration for her perseverance, as she had begun to learn dancing at an age when devotees to Terpsichore usually waver in their allegiance to that movement-enforcing muse. We were always on excellent terms, and she readily fell in with my views as *locum tenens* of the author—the more especially as I regarded the breakdown as something sacred and entirely her own personal and particular property. I was equally successful in gaining the goodwill of the remainder of the company, although the difficulties with which I had to contend in this case were, from causes out of my control, infinitely greater.

Persuading
Faust to be-
come Prince
Ruddinose.

I have said that the directress had changed the character of the entertainment given at her theatre from opera to burlesque. She

had a kind heart, and, although the tone of the play-bill was different, she retained the services of the ladies and gentlemen originally engaged for such masterpieces as Gounod's "Faust" and Verdi's "Il Trovatore." I was consequently a little embarrassed when I found myself compelled to cast a tenor, accustomed to sing the music of "Manrico," for a burlesque prince with a comic "make-up." However, he was most kind, and, after a little persuasion, fell in with my views, and even consented to wear a false nose suggestive of anti-temperance principles. When we had got about half-way through our rehearsals, he took me aside and said he had been thinking matters over, and had come to the conclusion that the public and the critics would be disappointed if he did not sing "My own, my guiding star"—could I not, as a personal favour, allow him to introduce that pleasingly-pathetic ballad? Anxious to conciliate him (for my *prima donna*, although a most amiable lady, had been moved almost to tears when she found that it was necessary for her to warble "Skid a malink" or some equally idiotic ditty) I did my best to meet his wishes. We held a council of war, and, it appearing to both of us that "My own, my guiding star" would seem somewhat incongruous when sung by a gentlemen to whom some such name as Prince Rednose would be personally appropriate, we selected a ballad slightly more suggestive of the supposed characteristics of the assumption. I rather think "Let others sing the

praise of wine" was chosen; but, if I am not greatly mistaken, "My own, my guiding star" was occasionally substituted for an encore, and, no doubt, if this were so, went very well. The gentleman had an admirable voice; if his "make-up" was comic, his style was in the highest degree artistic. We did at one time think (the suggestion came from me) of removing the false nose during the singing of "My own, my guiding star," to be resumed after the completion of the touching melody; but, unhappily, there were mechanical difficulties in the way. A nose suggestive of anti-temperance principles cannot be put on and off at a moment's notice—the more was the pity.

Snatching
a Favourable
Verdict.

At length the play was ready for production. I was naturally most anxious that it should be a success, because my relative, I knew, would be deeply disappointed if it ended in disaster. The first night came, and with it the critics, who, knowing the situation, were also good-naturedly desirous that all should go smoothly. Considering that the company would have felt more at their ease if they had appeared in the "Huguenots" or "L'Africaine," they did extremely well. The burlesque was perhaps a trifle *triste*, but this chimed in with the spirit in which the directress danced her breakdown. The curtain descended without any show of hostility, and at the last moment what I considered then, and still consider, a

brilliant notion occurred to me. I hurriedly wrote out a telegram and gave it to the stage-manager with certain instructions. Then the box-keepers, myself and a number of other well-wishers, raised the cry for "author." The stage-manager promptly appeared before the curtain with the telegram. "Ladies and gentlemen," said the stage-manager, "the author is unable to be present, because he is abroad on a bed of sickness. I have written this telegram, which I will read to you :—'The play excellently acted ; the scenery capital ; the applause enthusiastic ; altogether a success. I congratulate you.' That, ladies and gentlemen, is the telegram I have prepared for despatch to the author, absent under the painful circumstances I have narrated. Shall I send it ?" The box-keepers, myself, and the other well-wishers shouted "Yes," and the stage-manager retired. I felt then that we had secured a favourable verdict, which was at the service of the Press for publication if their kind hearts prompted them to record it.

All's Well
that
Ends Well.

Two days later I received a letter from my relative, who told me that, not wanting to bother me while I was looking after the rehearsals, he had concealed from me the fact that he was having rather an angry altercation with the management about terms. There had been some delay in the settlement of one of the conditions of purchase, which

had been arranged to take the convenient shape of a "sum down." He ended his letter as follows:—"But I can't quite make them out. I have been forced to threaten them with a solicitor—a threat they have received defiantly. And now I get a telegram which—so far as I can understand the English-French in which it has reached me—breathes a spirit of conciliation and goodwill. It assures me that 'the acting is excellent, the scenery capital, and the applause enthusiastic.' What on earth does it all mean?" Subsequently I explained matters, and the management nobly fulfilling their pecuniary engagements, the affair ended to the satisfaction of every one concerned, inclusive of the author and his *locum tenens*.



AUXILIARIES OF THE
DRAMA.



Auxiliaries of the Drama.

THE "MASKE OF FLOWERS."

A WIZARD AND A GOBLIN.

PLAY TIME WITH THE AMATEURS.

"QUEEN ELIZABETH'S PLAY."

"HAMLET" IN THE ROUGH.

DWELLING IN MARBLE HALLS.

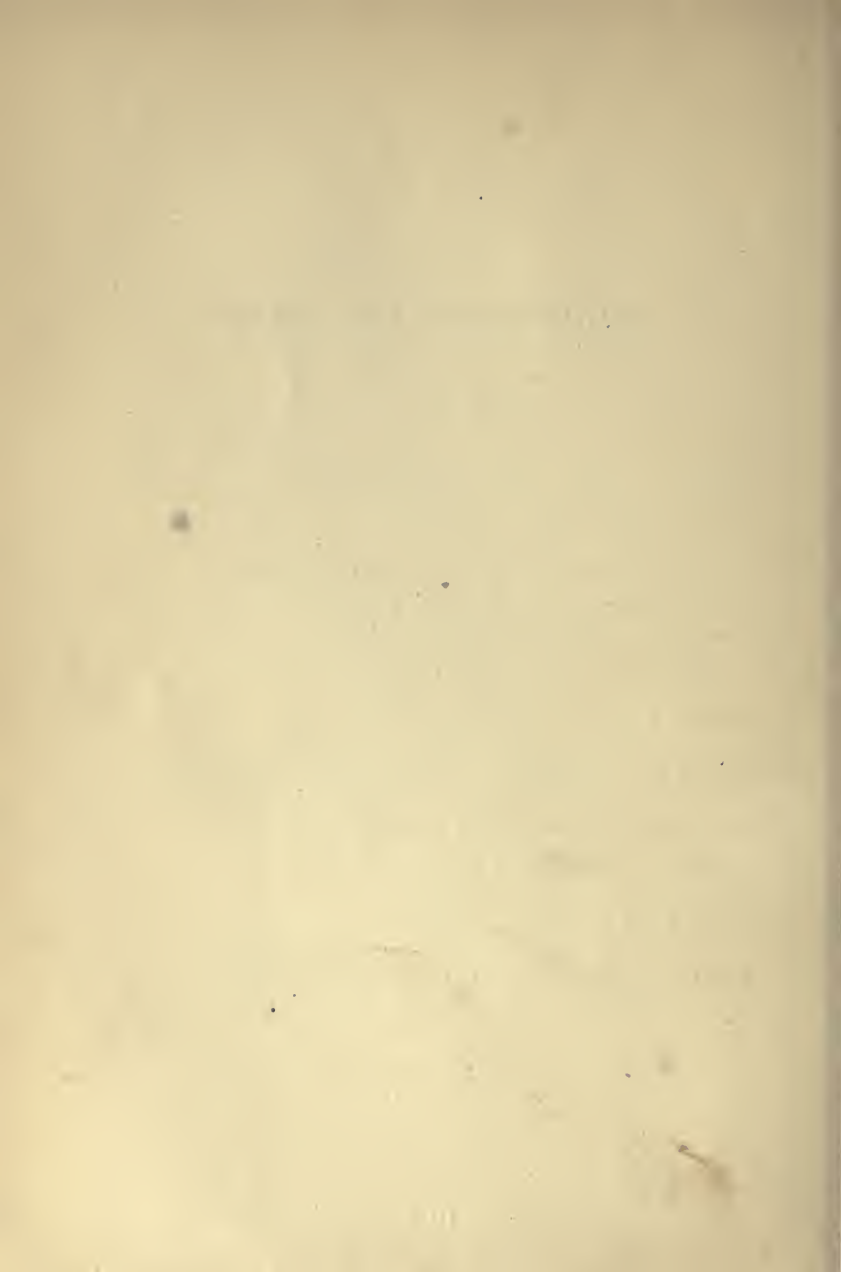
LENTEN FARE IN A LONDON THEATRE.

"BOAT-RACE NIGHT" AT EVANS'S.

SUPPER AT "EVANS'S."

THE DEAR OLD "POLY."

FROM FAR WEST TO NEARER EAST.



The "Maske of Flowers."

SEATED in the Library of Gray's Inn some
A "Happy
Thought" in
Gray's Inn. time in 1887, what Mr. Burnand would
call "a happy thought" occurred to me.
I had been reading the very excellent compilation of
the *History and Associations* of the Hon. Society, by
Mr. Douthwaite, our librarian, and had just finished
the chapter on the "Masques and Revels." I had seen
how, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the
home of The Bar, on the north side of Holborn, had
been renowned for its entertainments to Royalty; that
those celebrations had been held in such high Court
favour that a dignified personage, known as the
"Master of the Revels," had frequently received the
honour of knighthood, and that altogether it was con-
sidered a right and proper thing to temper the study of
law with the performance of stage plays. Then it
occurred to me that as H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught
had recently consented to become our Treasurer for the
year of Her Majesty's Jubilee, it would, perhaps, be a
graceful recognition of the honour conferred upon our

Society if we made some effort to reproduce the glories of the past in the direction of song and dance. It was my privilege to know some of the Masters of the Bench (my father was a member of Gray's Inn, like myself), and I thought that perhaps my presumption in offering a suggestion would be forgiven in consideration of the good intention that called forth the effrontery. I then and there wrote a letter to the Treasurer, proposing that the Society should organise an entertainment on the lines of those "carnival sports" for which Gray's Inn was celebrated some three hundred years ago. Finding that there seemed to be good evidence that the "Comedy of Errors" was played in our ancient hall in the time of Shakespeare, I suggested that possibly it would be advisable to attempt a revival of that piece. There had been recently a very interesting reproduction of the play in a theatre which, so far as I was able to judge, was about the proper size in regard to the purpose I had in view. I hinted that it would be within the resources of civilisation to obtain the scenery and perhaps the dresses, and gave roughly an estimate of the expense. I concluded my letter with (what I considered) an eloquent appeal to the best feelings of the Benchers, reminding them that we belonged to a Society that for many centuries had been famed for its loyalty and good taste. I despatched the letter after some hesitation, as I was not quite sure how my missive might be received. I did not exactly expect an enforced habitation in the

lowest bin in the Society's wine cellar, because I knew my masters were too good lawyers to run a risk of subjecting themselves to an action for false imprisonment, but I did think it possible that my letter might be received with that courteous acknowledgment which is, so to speak, next door but one to silent contempt. However, the letter was gone—the die was cast—and all I had to do was to wait as patiently as I could for the answer. It came in due course, and was highly satisfactory.

Reception by
the Masters of
the Bench.
The Treasurer had brought the matter before the Bench at a pension, and it had received favourable consideration. As the Treasurer was on the eve of retiring in favour of the Duke of Connaught, it was thought better to adjourn the matter until the newly-elected officer of the Inn had accepted the responsibility of leadership. Shortly afterwards I received a letter from Master Francis, the Deputy Treasurer of the Inn, asking me to call upon him at the Royal Courts of Justice, so that we might discuss the question fully. In due course I presented myself, and was delighted to find the Deputy Treasurer full of enthusiasm and kindness. He made a very valuable suggestion. He proposed that instead of playing the "Comedy of Errors," we should attempt a *Maske*—and sent me some of those interesting works for my inspection and consideration.

Discovery
of the
*Maske of
Flowers.*

Out of several I selected the *Maske of Flowers*. It was a rare book; only five copies were known to be in existence—one was in the Garrick collection preserved in the British Museum, another was in the Gough collection at the Bodleian Library, a third was purchased by Mr. Thorpe, the bookseller, the fourth was in the King's Library at the British Museum, and the fifth, presented to the Society by Mr. Samuel Kydd, was the one which had been handed to me. I took it home in triumph, and read it with the greatest pleasure and diligence. In a moment I saw the possibility of preparing it for performance at our hall in Gray's Inn. True, when originally produced, it was played at Whitehall on the occasion of a Royal wedding before King James I. and his Court. In those days stages and scenery were in their infancy. It was customary to have the performance in the body of the building, the *mise-en-scène* being supplied by set pieces. For instance, in this very "*Maske*" there was no mention of a scene proper, but only of a real fountain and some banks of flowers. Necessity is the mother of invention, and I proposed that we should treat the "*Maske*" as a stage play, converting hints into scenes, and taking the necessary liberties with the text to render a comprehensible performance possible. Again I addressed my good Masters of the Bench, with the gratifying result of being appointed by them "*Master of the Revels*,"

with the duty of acting as assessor to a committee entrusted with the carrying out of the scheme I had shadowed forth.

I had no trouble about the scenery. The
Valuable Assistance. late John O'Connor, R.I., was an old friend of mine. I had known him (before he turned his attention to those delightful studies "in the City" and "on the river" that subsequently made his name famous) as an artist at the Haymarket Theatre. He had also painted the scenes for the A.D.C. at Cambridge, and the more recent classical revivals at Oxford. He was full of enthusiasm, and readily undertook the task. The book of the words gave a very ample account of the stage effects, and Mr. O'Connor saw his way to reproducing them at Gray's Inn. For a proscenium we decided that nothing could be better than a reproduction in painted canvas of the fine old oak screen that ran beneath the music gallery. For the drop scene we had a subject to hand in the gardens of the Society in the days of Bacon, with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, and her Court, enjoying the promenade. So much for the scenery. I was equally fortunate about the dresses. That admirable Crichton, the late Hon. Lewis Wingfield, a gentleman who had become distinguished in so many walks of life—who was an artist, a novelist, a doctor, and a traveller,—was also one of my friends. He most kindly undertook to design the costumes, and

being connected with the Inns of Court (he had been a student, I fancy, of Lincoln's Inn), insisted that his services should be accepted gratuitously. The music and the dances being the remaining considerations, we found some of the music in the "Maske" itself, and that needed for the dances was suitably supplied by Mr. Birch Reynardson, a gentleman most learned in the measures of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. As for the dances themselves, I paid a visit to Mr. D'Auban, the well-known *maître de ballet* at Drury Lane, and with him visited the British Museum. There, with the kind assistance of Mr. Fagan, we unearthed *moriscos*, *pavans*, and *minuets* of the period.

The framework of the "Maske" being, so to speak, now complete, there was wanting only the company. The committee were very anxious (as, indeed, was I) that the performers should, according to precedent, consist exclusively of members of the Bar. Fortunately, there was an organisation ready to hand to supply exactly what we wanted. The Bar Musical Society had amongst its members both singers and instrumentalists, and one of the moving spirits of the body was my friend Mr. A. H. D. Prendergast, a most accomplished composer as well as a barrister of repute. It was my good fortune to secure his kind offices, and he immediately undertook to look after all the musical arrangements. In the

How I
Obtained the
Company.

Bar Musical Society, as I have said, we found gentlemen who could not only sing but dance, and that the gentler sex might be duly represented, a number of fair ladies whose fathers, brothers, and husbands were members of our forensic fraternity kindly volunteered their services. Our Treasurer, H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, had selected July 7th for the performance, and we were within measurable distance of that date. And then a season of hard work set in that I shall long remember. As a man who could neither sing nor dance, I, with the sense of justice of a Brutus, had cast myself for the small and unimportant part of *Invierno* or Winter. This character had to appear as a sort of chorus in company with *Gallus*, the Messenger of the Sun, and the embodiment of Spring, y'clept *Primavera*. This latter was in the original a youth; but finding that I had the valuable assistance of a lady who preferred not to sing, and did not wish to dance, I converted the lad into a maiden, with the happiest results. My friend, Mr. F. C. Norton, was *Gallus*, and was here, there, and everywhere, assisting in the production of the piece. The lady and ourselves had all "the talking"—for the rest of the company had but to dance and to sing. With a certain craftiness (usually, I hope, foreign to my nature), I had so managed that the greater portion of my part should be written on a scroll which *Gallus* had to give to me. When I once got the scroll I was comparatively comfortable; but before that period

arrived I felt a sense of uneasiness, created, I fancy, by an imperfect recollection of the text it was my duty to deliver. The ladies (they had not appeared in the original, but I had introduced them with appropriate courtesy as "goddesses") and the maskers worked all day long practising part-songs or the quaint old dances of the time of the Stuarts. The Benchers had most kindly allowed us the use of a portion of the library for our rehearsals, which enabled the readers to have the charm of music added to the other privileges they enjoyed within our ancient walls.

Thwarted
Ambition.

I must admit that I heard whispers of disapproval that Gray's Inn was not sufficiently well represented in the caste. As luck would have it, very few Gray's Inn men belonged to the Bar Musical Society, and consequently, except as regards Mr. Lewis Coward, myself, and one or two others, our honourable Society was not much *en evidence*. I consequently got permission to screen a request that Gray's Inn men would volunteer for service. The next day several put in an appearance. As it happened, Mr. Prendergast was in one room with some thirty persons singing, and Mr. D'Auban in another apartment with about the same number of dancers. I must confess that my visitors seemed a little put out, evidently being under the impression that the parts in the "Maske" had been filled up without due consideration

of the claims of the Society to which it was our joint honour to belong. I did my best to disabuse them of this false impression. I invited them to go into the room in which Mr. Prendergast was conducting a chorus of thirty, and suggested that proceedings should be suspended while *their* voices were tried. "I do hope you will be successful," I said earnestly, "because he has tried my voice, and I am not good enough!" Strange to say, they refused to have their voices tested! "Then," I urged, "you must dance. Mr. D'Auban has thirty men treading a *pavan*. It is rather a complicated movement, but exceedingly graceful. He will stop the rehearsal and let you have a shot at it. He has tried me, but I am grieved to say I cannot walk on my toes quite long enough. But no doubt you will be more successful." Again, strange to say, they refused to attempt to walk upon their toes for a sufficiently lengthy period. However, they most kindly volunteered to act as halberdiers, and subsequently gave a very picturesque appearance to the performances.

Finale—
"A Great
Success."

At length *the* day arrived. Everything was in order. We had the scenery ready, the music on the band stands, and the company prepared to appear. At the invitation of the Duke of Connaught, the Duchess of Edinburgh, the Duchess of Connaught, the Princess Louise, the Duchess of Teck, and the Princess May of Teck (now Duchess of York)

were present. And I am glad to say the performance was a complete—a gigantic success. To enter into details, the first part, which was rather of the rough-and-tumble school, went capitally, and when the pretty dances of the second part were performed by graceful ladies and gallant (and learned) lords, the enthusiasm of the audience knew no bounds. I was very glad when it was over, for after all it might have been a failure, and then what would have the shades of Sir Richard Gipps and my other knightly predecessors in the office of “Master of the Revels” have said or thought?

A Wizard and a Goblin.

I MUST confess that from my earliest days
Assisting a
Conjurer. a wizard has had a fascination for me.

I remember, when I was a boy rising ten, I volunteered to assist on the stage of the Lyceum when a conjurer required the temporary assistance of "some young gentleman in the audience." Having been carefully primed by two elder brothers "what to do," I dropped a seemingly empty box that had been entrusted to my care, and prematurely produced from its apparently vacant recesses a guinea-pig, a lady's handkerchief, and a key adorned with a blue ribbon. After this I was told that the conjurer had no further need of my services.

The Wizard
of the
North. I am not sure whether wizards have a right to claim kinship with players. That they are actors—and excellent actors—is undoubtedly the case. It is the "cackle" that accompanies the trick that helps so materially to secure its success. And certainly one of the conjurers was decidedly an actor. I refer to Professor Anderson, the once famous Wizard of the North. He was in the habit of taking a theatre,

and, after a season devoted to conjuring, winding up with a performance of "Rob Roy," with himself cast for the title *rôle*. He was lessee of Covent Garden in 1856, when the theatre was burned to the ground after a grand masquerade ball, and from that date his popularity began to wane. He was assisted by several daughters, who used to call him "Papa," and seemed to be (and probably were) on the most affectionate terms with their father. The Professor used to treat his daughters with equal fondness, and the effect was sometimes very comical. Then, as now, "second sight" was very popular, and the Professor, with the assistance of one of the young ladies, used to give "a demonstration." The Wizard, after a handkerchief had been tied over her eyes, would commence: "Now, darling, can you tell me what I am holding in my hand?" "Yes, dear papa, a watch chain." "You are quite right, love; it is a watch chain. And now, darling, can you tell me whether it is made of silver or gold?" "I cannot see very clearly, but I think, dear papa, it must be made of silver." "Yes, my dear, you are right;" (to one of the audience) "it is made of silver. Thank you. And now, angel, tell me—is it a gentleman's chain or a lady's?" "A gentleman's chain, dear papa;" and so on. The effect of this conversation upon the audience was to create the impression that we had suddenly broken in upon the privacy of the happiest of happy homes.

The Great
Gun Trick.

One of the attractions of the performance was called "The Great Gun Trick," and it certainly was extremely clever. The Professor used to give one of the audience a rifle, some powder, and a marked bullet. The marksman was then requested to load and prepare to fire. The Professor used then to walk to the end of the stage, and invite the rifleman to shoot him. Then, after the marksman had fired, he used to produce the marked bullet, insisting that he had caught it on a plate.

The Professor
in a Fix.

On one occasion a friend of mine, who was an admirable amateur conjurer, offered himself as an assistant. He took the gun and the ammunition, and duly loaded. It was the custom of the Professor to give the bullet a final tap with his wand to see that it was rammed down properly, and this final tap, I have been told, extracted the bullet. This my friend knew, and when the Professor offered his assistance he politely declined. Anderson did not insist, but coolly walked to the end of the stage, and called out, "Now, sir, take a good aim at me, and fire!" My friend hesitated, as he was well aware that the gun he was holding was really loaded. "Fire, sir, fire!" cried the Professor. My friend lowered the weapon, and, saying he could not let it off, returned it to Anderson, who immediately, under pretence of seeing whether it had been properly loaded, extracted the bullet. Then

he gave the gun to someone else. But before the rifle was fired, he addressed the audience. "Ladies and gentlemen," said he, "the person who has just resumed his seat knew my trick, and foiled it. If he had fired, this, probably, would have been my last appearance before you. But he hadn't sufficient nerve to shoot me!" When it dawned upon the house that Anderson had risked his life rather than confess himself beaten, the applause was deafening. My friend told me that he felt rather small, and regretted his *penchant* for practical joking. I was not surprised at the statement.

Charles
Mathews
and "The
Great Gun
Trick."

The Great Gun Trick was so successful that a farce was written by Charles Mathews, in which that admirable comedian played the principal character. The farce was called after the illusion, and Mathews used to give an excellent parody of the manner of Anderson. He had one incident which always caused roars of laughter. At the commencement of the piece he used to produce an umbrella, and, attaching it to a wire that came from the flies, call attention to it. "Ladies and gentlemen," he used to say,—“Will you please look at this umbrella? It is of ordinary but strong silk, and the handle is easy of identification. Here, examine it for yourselves.” And then it was passed round. “And now,” he would continue, when he once more had it in his hands, “I am going to attach it to this wire, and I must request

you to watch it. I particularly wish you to see that it is touched by no one." Then he used to make no further allusion to the suspended umbrella, and it was left hanging to the wire when the curtain fell. At this some one in the audience (no doubt a confederate) used to cry, "Umbrella!" and the shout was taken up. Charles Mathews used to reenter before the curtain, and seem at first a little surprised at the noise. Then he appeared to suddenly remember the umbrella, and hastened to remove it. The cries were followed by a dead silence, the entire audience expecting some new "demonstration." Upon this Charles Mathews merely smiled, and, having tucked his *parapluie* under his arm, observed: "Ladies and Gentlemen,—I am infinitely obliged to you. The fact is, I am always losing my umbrella—especially behind the scenes of this theatre. So I thought that if I could induce all of you to keep your eyes upon it, it would be quite safe. Thank you very much indeed." And, with a bow to the audience, he used to retire amidst general hilarity.

Another conjurer, who was my delight
"Goblin Sparkling." many years ago, was a gentleman calling
himself the Wizard of One of the Points
of the Compass—I forget which. He was best
known, I fancy, in the provinces; but his speciality
was an attendant, who rejoiced in some name like
"Goblin Sparkling." The latter was a lad of the pro-

portions of the "fat boy in *Pickwick*," and his mission on earth was to be held up to ridicule, at the instance of his "master." Of course, "Sparkling" was a misnomer, for he was seemingly stupid, and certainly lumbering. How we youngsters used to laugh when he was pushed over a chair, or threatened with chastisement for making some mistake in the handling of the Wizard's paraphernalia! Poor boy! he appeared completely cowed, and I felt that it was hard, indeed, that a lad should be so bullied. When I had grown to man's estate, I came across a middle-aged individual whose features seemed to be familiar to me. He was standing in the office of a newspaper of which I was the editor, and I entered into conversation with him. After a few remarks of a general character, he said to me: "You don't know who I am. You don't remember me, although I fancy you have seen me frequently. I am Goblin Sparkling." Then, of course, I recognised him, and I was glad to find that he had escaped from the thralldom of his tyrannical master. However, I thought it the civil thing to ask after his employer, and I made a kind enquiry. "Oh, he has left me for some time," he replied. "The fact is, he was not steady enough to suit my tastes. His tricks were not bad, and he was clever at sleight-of-hand; but I never could thoroughly rely upon him." I was rather surprised at this tone, so I asked him how he managed to be rid of him. "Well, it was rather hard," he confessed, "because, you see, we

had been so long together. But I had to take the bull by the horns, and so at last we parted." "Did you run away from him?" I asked. "Run away," he exclaimed, "why should I run away? No; as he would not take a hint, at last I made up my mind, called him into my room, *and discharged him!*" I then found that the Wizard was the servant and the Goblin the employer of magic labour!

Play Time with the Amateurs.

The
"Strollers"
and the
"Stagers." I AM reminded every year by a paragraph in the papers that one of the oldest of our amateur dramatic clubs puts in an appearance at Windsor. The Strollers, and the Stagers have an illustrious past. The latter, in 1891, celebrated their Jubilee in Canterbury during the cricket week, amidst great rejoicing, and the former, I understand, are equally worthy of congratulation, for both societies are decidedly elderly. They are senior to the Cambridge A.D.C., even when to its fairly lengthy career is added the life of its "town" precursor, the Cambridge Athenæum. And reading of their success reminds me that for some years I, too, was amongst the amateurs, and that a few random recollections may not be uninteresting to those of my readers who have a taste for play acting.

Fortunes of
"The Blazing
Burgess," by
T. G. Bowles. I believe my first appearance on any stage was at a Fancy Bazaar, given in the Exhibition Building at South Kensington, which had been left empty for some years after the

holding of the "World's Show" of 1862. I was, of course, only a lad. I strutted as a villain, or something of that sort, in a Richardson's Booth, presided over by Lady Anne Sherson. We played a burlesque drama, called "The Blazing Burgee; or, The Port Admiral," written by Thomas Gibson Bowles, then of the Legacy Duty Office, subsequently originator and proprietor of *Vanity Fair*, and now M.P. for King's Lynn; and supported by the late Frank Marshall, the well-known playwright, essayist, and Editor of the "Henry Irving Shakespeare," who appeared as a beauty in distress. We had a rival show in the building, at which a grand military spectacle was played, called "The Siege of Seringapatam," written by F. C. Burnand, then a rising young barrister, humourist, and burlesque writer, who had, a short while before, taken his degree at Trinity, Cambridge. In Mr. Burnand's troupe were a number of gentlemen who have certainly made their mark in every walk of life. It was the first time I had the opportunity of seeing a man of whom I had heard so much. "F.C.B." was wearing the uniform of a General, and I, the garb of a juvenile Richard the Third. The Prince and Princess of Wales honoured the bazaar with their immediate patronage, and shortly afterwards, when "The Blazing Burgee" was reproduced at the Horticultural Gardens (again for a charitable object), the Princess Louise was present at its performance. On that occasion I appeared as "The Beauty in

Distress," my friend Frank Marshall surrendering his part to me, to personally superintend the production of a second burlesque drama of his own concoction, called "Braganzio, the Brigand." There was yet a third performance in the grounds of Campden House after that famous edifice had been destroyed by fire. I shall never forget it. There was no dressing-room, and so we had to get into our costumes behind some bushes, and play on a sort of terrace without scenery. The bazaar was a dead failure. Half-a-guinea was charged for admission, in aid (if my recollection is not at fault) of some Italian charity. Only about a dozen people turned up, and they were severally accosted by a little girl in red, green and white, who asked them "to buy a cigar for only five shillings." Among the spectators were Mario and Grisi, and I remember they roared at our performance. It must have been funny, for we were all in an extremely bad humour, and played the piece, as the French would say, *sans plaisir*. Even Thomas Gibson Bowles, the author, who appeared as a gallant British tar, was on that occasion comparatively feeble. As for myself, I was hopelessly bad. Well, it was a little trying, for it began to rain, and we could not help envying our scanty audience their sheltering umbrellas! This, I imagine, must have been the first attempt at establishing "Pastoral Plays." It was not entirely successful!

Some
Distinguished
Amateurs.

Some twenty or so years ago, Amateur Theatricals were immensely popular, and there were several troupes. I belonged to most of them, but I played only small parts, that is to say, as a rule. Lady Anne Sherson, to whom I have already referred, was immensely fond of the boards, and used to appear in "The Rough Diamond," supported by her brother, the Marquis Townshend, then Lord Rainham. Then there was Mrs. Milner Gibson (wife of the President of the Board of Trade), who was the organiser of many a successful performance. I remember taking part in "Court Cards," when the cast included Sir Charles Young, Palgrave Simpson and Herman Merivale, the dramatists; Miss Barker (a most admirable amateur), and Mrs. Milner Gibson herself. Then Lady Barrett-Lennard had a very good company. I have in my newspaper cuttings a notice of a performance of "Under False Colours," written by Mrs. Steele (sister of Lady Barrett-Lennard), in which Sir Thomas (then Sheriff of Essex), his wife, Mr. Charles Collette (very recently indeed of the 3rd Dragoon Guards), Mr. "Augustus Montagu" (well known at the Admiralty, Whitehall), and I myself are singled out for approbation. Then there was the United Service Amateur Dramatic Club, of which I (qualified by my commission in the Militia) was also a member. It changed its name several times. It became the St. Valentine's Club, then the Irrational Knot, and I fancy still survives under

some other title. It was founded either by Major Mahon or Alfred Thompson (author, artist, and ex-Lieutenant of Cavalry, who died only a few months since), and numbered amongst its members Major Wingfield (Gentleman-at-Arms and inventor of Badminton, the precursor of Lawn Tennis), the two Fitz-Georges, Mr. Bashford (late Scots Greys and T. R. Haymarket), and Owen Whiteside, once adjutant of a smart regiment of Hussars, and subsequently special correspondent to the *Morning Post*. Nowadays *tableaux vivants* and plays without words have rather taken the place of the old-fashioned amateur theatricals, so it is pleasing to note that the Windsor Strollers and the Old Stagers are still to the fore. Long may they flourish!

A Memorable
Amateur
Performance.

Perhaps one of the best non-professional productions of comparatively modern times was the entertainment given by the then members of the *Punch* staff on the occasion of the Bennett Benefit. The pieces selected for performance were "A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing" and "Cox and Box," the "musical farcical triumphviretta" by F. C. Burnand, Arthur Sullivan and Maddison Morton. Tom Taylor played the hero in his own piece, and was supported by Miss Kate Terry and his colleagues of the Mahogany Tree in Bouverie Street. At one of the representations (the programme was followed both in London and Manchester) a "practical" door refused to

move, upon which the author of "Happy Thoughts" with ready wit called Zoyland the Blacksmith "to bring his basket and open it." Mr. Mark Lemon was Colonel Kirke, and Mr. (now Sir) John Tenniel, Lord Churchill. And the name of the first editor of *Punch* reminds me that he was an accomplished amateur, and assisted materially to render the Dickens-cum-Wilkie Collins amateur theatricals at Tavistock House so entirely successful. Subsequently Mr. Lemon played "Sir John Falstaff" in the provinces with a troupe of semi-amateurs, numbering amongst its members one of our best exponents of black and white. "Arthur Sketchley," otherwise Mr. George Rose, also attempted the character of the burly knight, but, like his predecessor, the genial author of "Mrs. Brown at the Play," amusing to a degree as an entertainer, was never quite a success on the "professional" boards.

The Third
Officer in
"The Lady of
Lyons."
In writing one's reminiscences it is a little difficult to drop one's own personality, and, consequently, I trust I may be pardoned if I give my own version of a story concerning myself that has already appeared in print in a book recently published by my friend the late lamented Corney Grain, and with this "authorised edition" I bring my recollections of amateur Thespians to a close. I regret to say that before I retired from the private theatrical boards I had a reputation for indulging in

what is technically known as "gag." Possibly to correct this tendency, I was once cast for the Third Officer in "The Lady of Lyons," on the condition that I should keep to the words of the text. Those words were not many as arranged at rehearsal. "Promotion is very rapid in the French army. I was made a lieutenant yesterday. But who is this Morier, the hero of Lodi—the favourite of the commander-in-chief?" The Third Officer was only required to converse with the First and Second Ditto (to account for the rapid rise of Claude Melnotte), at the commencement of the last act. Having once played Charles Mathews' part in "London Assurance" (but not exactly as *he* played it—this by the way), I felt a little hurt that a *rôle* of no greater importance had been entrusted to me. However, I did my best to give it prominence. My colleagues, the First and Second Ditto, were "got up" young and beautiful (as they should have been), and then I implored my old friend, Mr. Clarkson, to "do me" according to my own special directions. After some remonstrance the eminent wig-maker acceded to my earnest wishes. The result was as follows: The First and Second Ditto had their chat. Then the cue for the appearance of the Third Officer was given, when a very old man, with long, flowing white beard and locks, tottered in, supporting his aged and trembling frame with a beech staff. In a feeble, piping voice, this centenarian veteran exclaimed, "Promotion is very rapid in

the French army—I was made a lieutenant yesterday !” Well, the audience for some reason or other roared with laughter, and I could not finish the words of my part. However, as I had been accused of “gagging,” no doubt the management were pleased at the rude interruption !

“Queen Elizabeth’s Play.”

Not very long ago I had the honour of
A Visit to the
Westminster
Play. forming one of an audience congregated
together in the Dormitory of St. Peter’s
College, Westminster, to “assist” at the performance of a play that since the days of Her late Majesty Elizabeth has been (with a few omissions) an annual feature. “Phormio” was being acted, and I carried back my recollection to an occasion when one whose name was then in the Obituary List of Old Westminster (my elder brother, the late Gilbert à Beckett) had appeared in the programme more than thirty years ago, as a member of the *dramatis personæ*. I looked on the old walls of the Dormitory for the work of his vanished hand, but could not find it. It may have been there, but beyond my range of sight, for I was some distance from one side of the Dormitory, which was inadequately lighted. But in the course of my researches I made a discovery. The masonry had been repaired hither and thither, and the old names had suffered. Close to the seat I occupied there were half a signature and half a date, and the other halves had been supplied by a brand-new stone. And when I remembered that it was not so long ago that, at a

meeting of Old Westminster to consider the future of one of our three great schools, it was decided that it should not be removed to the country, partly on account of these very names, I could not help feeling pained surprise.

The Play
under
Dr. Liddell.

On the pink programme (the colour is appropriate, for pink belongs to Westminster as light blue belongs to Eton, and in the earlier days of the University Race Oxford wore the Westminster colours as Cambridge does to this day the Etonian) appeared a reference to the late Dr. Liddell, who was then retiring from the Deanery of Christ Church. The eminent joint-author of the *Lexicon* vacated the Head Mastership in 1856, and there are many of his pupils who are still living and who remember his attendance at the rehearsals of the play. The programme to which I have referred alludes to the debt the college owes to Dr. Liddell's scholarship.

It was in the days of Dean Liddell that the splendid scenery (painted, if my memory does not play me false, by Clarkson Stanfield) first appeared, and particular attention was bestowed upon costume. The Dean took the greatest possible interest in the production, and was enthusiastically seconded by Mrs. Liddell, who always "passed" the dresses, adding to their effect by lending gems and golden ornaments from her own store.

Dr. Liddell
at
Rehearsal.

The late Head Master (who has had a couple of successors) was particularly anxious to keep up the spirit of the time. Dignified himself, he wished to see his pupils dignified as became scholars and gentlemen. On one occasion, when a youth had to appear under the influence of wine, he stopped the rehearsal to have the lines repeated. The story goes (and I believe it) that he addressed the "Adolescens" as follows:—"My dear —, you have not quite caught the proper tone. You are supposed to be intoxicated, and may consequently walk somewhat unsteadily. But when you reel about, mind you stagger with classical dignity!" It is said that the scholar who played the part was so nervous of losing his voice that he took lozenges supposed to be beneficial to the vocal organs to such an extent that, on the evening of the performance, he could not utter a single intelligible word, and, to restore his confidence, imbibed egg-flip in the same exaggerated quantities, with no better effect. The result was that, when the under-the-influence-of-wine scene was reached, his acting was less classical than convincing! So goes the story, which may be a story in another sense.

A Low
Comedian
of the (very)
Olden Times.

As every one knows, all the plays of Terence and Plautus contain a slave, who acts as the low comedian. In the old-fashioned pantomimes an evident survival of the slave

appeared as the servant of the squire, to become, at the transformation, clown to his master's pantaloon. A friend of mine, who has since made his name distinguished on the amateur boards, was cast for one of these gentry in the Adelphi, and was duly coached by Dr. Liddell how the part should be played. He was to be dignified, and to make his points in the conventional manner. But my friend had seen (and was an admirer of) Mr. Wright, then playing with great success at the Old Adelphi Theatre, in the Strand, and so, although carefully attending to all the head master's hints at rehearsal, he made up his mind that his representation "at night" should savour somewhat of the more modern school. Thus, when the curtain rose and showed the admirable scenery with its temple and distant architecture, my friend came on, and, instead of being classical, was "Strandesque." The reading was an enormous success, and when questioned about the matter subsequently, it is rumoured that he replied "that, as he was playing in the Adelphi, he thought he wouldn't be wrong if he were Wright!"

“Hamlet” in the Rough.

PERHAPS the most unconventional representation of “Hamlet” with which I was ever connected was an entertainment given in aid of some charity, about twenty years ago, at the Marylebone theatre, when my dear friend, the late lamented Mr. Frank Marshall, suddenly made up his mind to appear as Hamlet “for one night only.”

As all the dramatic world knows, Mr. Marshall was the editor and projector of “The Henry Irving Shakespeare,” and one of the ripest Shakespearian students of modern times. I was most anxious to support him when he decided upon giving his “selections” from the tragedy, and urged him to allow me to appear as the Ghost. But unfortunately I had the reputation of “playing the fool,” and this evil report stood in the way of my histrionic ambition. However, as a sort of compromise, at the last moment (in fact, on the morning of the performance) my friend begged me to play the audience in, by appearing in “Number One Round the Corner.” This was a distinct descent from Shakespeare; but I happened to be staying in a country house in which my

friend, Mr. J. L. Molloy (Barrister-at-law, and composer of ballads), was also a guest; and, as that gentleman kindly volunteered to share the labours of the farce with me, I consented. Mr. Molloy, who was an admirable amateur actor, knew the piece backwards, but I had never played in it before. We rehearsed it in the train on our way from Herefordshire, and when we stopped at the stations, I have no doubt our fellow-travellers in other compartments must have been surprised at the scraps of conversation they must have overheard.

"Number One Round the Corner" is a touch-and-go sort of a farce, full of bustle and action, in which there are only two characters, originally played by Robert Roxby and Charles Mathews. Here, by the way, I may note that, although Frank Matthews and his namesake frequently belonged to the same company and played in the same pieces, they were not even connections. To return to "Number One Round the Corner," which should have been played with a scene representing some poverty-stricken bachelor's lodgings in Soho. When Mr. Molloy and I arrived at the Marylebone Theatre we found that our scene had been set—and such a scene! Instead of a dilapidated domestic interior, we had a gorgeous apartment blazing with gold and precious stones! The stage carpenter said he was very sorry, and declared "it was the best he could do for us." It was the Palace Scene from the

last pantomime! We were both in evening dress, and had no time to make an alteration in our costume. So we determined to appear as we were, thinking that perhaps our toilette might help the palace out. I was discovered, and remember that I accounted for my gorgeous surroundings by exclaiming: "It is fortunate that my Uncle Joe left me five hundred pounds, but I am not sure I was quite wise in spending every penny of it in doing up these rooms in Oriental fashion. Still, reading his will thoughtfully, that seemed to be his desire! And the result? I am left at the present moment with nothing in my pocket but the ridiculous sum of twopence half-penny!" This brought us back to our starting-point, and we rattled through the farce fairly successfully. I remember we had arranged rather a novelty. At the end of the piece I said to my friend: "What are you doing with yourself this evening?" He replied, "Nothing. Why?" "Because," I answered, "if you would like to see Frank Marshall in Hamlet, I think I can get you a box." "Can you really?" he returned, "nothing on earth I should like better." "Then come with me," I replied, leading the way from the stage into one of the proscenium boxes, where we sat for the remainder of the evening!

"Hamlet"
a Host
in Himself.

The selections from "Hamlet" were distinctly amusing. The scenery might have been more appropriate. Elsinore, to judge

from the staging, was an up-to-date sort of place. The view of the town as seen from the ramparts suggested the idea that in the old Danish capital must have been included not only a noble-looking hotel, but also a roomy railway station! Again, the churchyard in which Ophelia was buried had in its near neighbourhood a village inn bearing the not-altogether-Scandinavian sign of the "Royal Oak." But these were details which in no way detracted from the evening's enjoyment. My friend, Frank Marshall, gave what I may term an intelligent reading of the unfortunate Prince. He had one enormous advantage over the rest of the cast—he knew his part. The remainder of the *dramatis personæ* were painfully imperfect, and depended entirely on my friend's prompting for utterance. The Ophelia was a lady who had never played in tragedy before, and when she did not quite catch the drift of Hamlet's well-intentioned efforts to assist her, sharply queried, "What?" The Ghost was politely conciliatory, and was so pleased when he caught up a line of his part that he repeated it—sometimes more than once. I must confess I was greatly amused at the whole performance, and frequently laughed. This did not escape the notice of Mr. Marshall, who, whenever he passed our box, did not fail to hurl at us (in an undertone) expressions of defiance and abuse. He was rather short-tempered, and very intolerant of chaff. Thus he gave one of his

soliloquies somewhat in this manner: "To be or not to be"—(*aside to us in the box*): "Can't you shut up?" (*Aloud*): "That is the question!"—(*Aside to us*): "Spoiling it all by that idiotic giggling"—(*Aloud*): "Whether it is better," &c., &c. And so on. It is a long time ago, and I cannot remember all the particulars, but I have a strong impression that the King of the occasion, by his demeanour, fostered the opinion that he was conscientiously opposed to the temperance movement. Altogether it was a very joyous evening indeed.

Another "Hamlet" that I must confess
"Hamlet"
in
Dumb Show. caused me a great deal of unconventional pleasure was Mr. Bellew's reading of the tragedy. Mr. Bellew, who had been originally a clergyman of the Church of England, on changing his creed became an entertainer. He was an admirable elocutionist, and is said to have been of great assistance to Mr. Fechter in teaching that eminent tragedian the value of English blank verse. It occurred to Mr. Bellew to read "Hamlet" in front of a performance of the tragedy in dumb show. The idea was not a bad one, if the actors could have fitted in their gestures at the right moment to suit the speaker's words. But there was special value in that "if." As a matter of fact the players were a couple of bars behind the reciters.

Shakespeare
Avowedly
Burlesqued.

There have been only two cases, to my knowledge, of a burlesque of "Hamlet." The latest was a little skit, by Mr. W. S. Gilbert, called "Rozenkrantz and Guildenstern," a play that is not very likely to keep the stage. The first was a far more important work, written by John Poole, the author of *Paul Pry*, and published at the commencement of the century. It is dedicated to the Emperor of China, to whom the author observes: "he trusts that he will not be charged with any sinister motive in soliciting his Majesty's protection when he openly declares that he cannot boast of the felicity of caring five farthings for his Imperial Majesty, and that to the best of his belief his Majesty does not care half so much for him." It is a clever skit, and contains an amusing parody of the work of the commentators. Buckstone and Sothorn once gave the jealousy scene out of "Othello," but it "failed to please." Certainly, Shakespeare is rarely parodied. On the other hand, his masterpieces are seldom played without the element of burlesque being unconsciously present in some shape or other.

Dwelling in Marble Halls.

I HAD the good fortune some little while ago to spend a very enjoyable couple of hours at the Oxford Music Hall. Although
A Visit to the
Oldest of the
Halls. I have heard that the establishment is always supplied with an admirable programme, for one reason or another I had not been within its doors for many years. And I must confess I regretted the omission, for certainly I have never seen a better variety entertainment. Everything was good of its kind, and there were many kinds. There were no pauses between the "turns," the orchestra was excellent, and the audience were at once discriminating and enthusiastic. Everything was bright and pleasing. As I entered, a talented foreign gentleman was giving a clever imitation of birds as the refrain to a little French song. He was greatly applauded, and then he introduced two ladies, and, having placed one of them into a sack as a preliminary to placing the sack into a locked and corded box, the excitement reached fever-heat. "In two seconds," said the gentleman, "I will make she who is left outside take the place of she who is inside." And he was as good as his word. The box was put on a

platform, and surrounded by a sort of curtained clothes-horse, and—hi, presto!—the ladies had changed places! It was wonderfully neatly executed.

As I looked at the clever trick (I have not
The Value of
a Reputation. the faintest notion how it was done) I was

reminded of a somewhat similar illusion I once witnessed at the Polytechnic. The popularity of "The Royal Institution" (as it was called by the staff of lecturers) was on the wane, and science was becoming more and more mixed with pure amusement. In a lecture on "An Eclipse of the Moon," or "The Ruins of Pagan Rome," or "The Mysteries of the Caverns of the Sea," or something of that sort, a cabinet was introduced, and the lecturer's assistant was placed therein. Then there was a pause—the doors of the cabinet were thrown open, and the assistant had disappeared! The lecturer was accustomed to interpolate this trick as a sort of concession to the children. He would say: "And now, for a moment, we will part with the company of the Moon, or the Colosseum, or the Octopus" (as the subject of the lecture might be), "and give our minds to a matter of natural science. Here, ladies and gentlemen, we have a cupboard on a platform, which is some three or four feet distant from the white disc on which I have had the honour of showing you the transit of Venus, or the art treasures of the Vatican, or the industry of the coral insect" (according to circum-

stances). "You will notice that there is no connection between the cupboard and the disc." Upon one occasion a gentleman in the audience asked if he might join the lecturer as a committee of investigation. "I should be delighted to have your company, sir," replied the man of science; "but it would take some time to come round. But perhaps this will be sufficient. Ladies and gentlemen, I have been connected with this institution for many years, as you know, and I pledge you my solemn word of honour—yes, ladies and gentlemen, my solemn word of honour—that there is no connection whatever between the cupboard and the disc. The cupboard is totally severed from any object in its neighbourhood. I pledge you that this is the case, on my solemn word of honour." This statement was received with courteous but not very hearty applause, which, however, was greatly increased when a shrill voice from the gallery shouted, "All right, guv'nor; put a light be'ind it!"

Woodin and
his "Olio of
Oddities."

But to return to the Oxford. The talented trio, with their box, platform, and sack, were followed by a gentleman who was described in the bills as a "shadowgraphist," who entertained us for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour with some clever tricks, a few assumptions of contrasted characters, and last, but certainly not least, an excellent shadow pantomime. To me the change of character (managed by

the expression of the face and the folding of a felt crownless hat) was the most interesting feature of the "turn," as it conjured up before me several famous entertainers of the past. There was notably Woodin, who engaged Tom Robertson and W. S. Gilbert (amongst others) to write his "entertainment" for him. He was a clever performer, and had but one fault—he never quite lost his individuality. He might dive down under the table that served as a screen to hide him from the audience, and emerge as "Miss May Sunflower," or "Major-General Thunder," or "the Rev. Milde Meekman," but we all knew him. It was the one and only Woodin, and he might call himself whatever he liked without in the least changing his personality. And here I may say that Mr. Woodin established his "Carpet Bag" and "Olio of Oddities" in a hall that now has grown into Toole's Theatre and the premises of the Beefsteak Club. Before it was taken by the popular entertainer it belonged to the Fathers of the Oratory, who used it as a chapel until they migrated to Brompton. And this reminds me that the premises once devoted to Burford's Panorama in Leicester Square are now used by French Catholics as a church with the truly national title of "Notre Dame de France."

A Spirited
Performance.

Speaking of Woodin, I cannot help recalling the story I have heard of the *début* of an actor (once well and favourably known in

his profession) who proposed leaving the stage to adopt the same line of business. This actor had chosen a benefit *matinée* made up of many "turns" for his first attempt. He was not exactly a "Blue Ribbonite" at any time, and on this occasion, no doubt anxious about the result of his enterprise, he had emphatically lunched. The table with its "make-ups" was duly placed in the centre of the stage, and then the entertainer (walking a little unsteadily) himself appeared. He was greeted with great applause. He represented one of Dickens's characters. "Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "let me introduce you to Pecksniff—gra' fren' of mine." Then he paused, and added—seemingly as a happy after-thought:—"Pecksniff—drunk, ladies and gentlemen. Pecksniff—very drunk!" He then was understood to announce that he was about to appear as "Pickwick," or, rather, as he thickly corrected himself, "the gra' Napoleon." Then he disappeared beneath the table. There was a pause which grew longer and longer, until the audience became exhausted. But, in spite of the cheers and Kentish fire, neither "Pickwick" nor "the gra' Napoleon" put in an appearance. Ultimately the curtain had to be prematurely lowered, and the table was then removed from the stage. As for the entertainer, he was found fast asleep, clasping in one hand the bâton of a Marshal of the French army, and in the other a recently-emptied whisky bottle, and wearing over his closed eyes a pair of blue spectacles!

Concerning
Leotard.

But to return again to the Oxford. The special feature of the evening's entertainment was the appearance of two charming and clever young *demoiselles* (said, and I have no doubt justly said, to be "The Première Lady Trapeze Artistes in the World") in "their marvellous performance." Nothing could have been neater than the manner in which one of the relatives (they were sisters) caught the other as she flew from bar to bar through the air. I have seen nothing better since I formed one of a group of twenty on the stage of the Alhambra when the never-to-be-forgotten Leotard made his appearance in the sixties. Nothing could exceed the charming grace of the talented Frenchman, who, it was said, had given up practising at the Bar as an advocate to practice with the bar as an athlete. He was a very pleasant person, and, when he first appeared, wore the plainest costume for an acrobat that had ever been seen on the stage. I have watched scores of trapezists since his time, but none have seemed to me to equal him. He performed his feats with so much dexterity and apparent ease that it never occurred to anyone that there was any danger, and the net (now the regulation) was not used until years later than the date of his *début*.

Memories
of the Past.

To return once again to the Oxford. As I sat in the hall that has since been replaced by another of grander proportions, I could

not help thinking of the past. If my memory is not treacherous, this was the first of the Theatres of Varieties. I fancy my old friend Mr. Morton was here before he crossed the river and took up his quarters at the Canterbury, to return once again to the Middlesex side when he associated himself with the fortunes of the Palace. It was here that Miss Russell used to sing in those excellent selections from Verdi and Offenbach. How well I remember "Orpheo aux Enfers" and "The Trovatore." There were St. Aubyn, who was second tenor in the Pyne and Harrison Company; and Jonghmanns, who conducted the Glee Boys at Paddy Green's (otherwise Evans). Then Miss St. John and Miss Soldene both appeared at the Oxford before they migrated to the opera-bouffe stage. "Champagne Charley" first announced his name at the old hall, and a gentleman who described himself as "an Amsterdam'd scamp" (or some such character) was for long the rage of London. I have a personal interest in the old place, as it was the initial hall to welcome the first paper I ever edited. Mr. Morton was a good friend to the *Glow-worm*, and that evening journal was considered in those far-off days one of the entertainments of the place. And it certainly was in the hand of nearly every *habitué*. We had excellent "sporting," and were proud of it.

Lenten Fare at a London Theatre.

SOME years ago, when Society was "stricter" than at present, the season of Lent The Theatres before Easter. meant a great falling off in the attendance at the theatres, and in Holy Week (or Passion Week, as the seven days, including Good Friday, are sometimes incorrectly termed) the playhouses were closed altogether. Even now, just before Easter, entertainments of a rather penitential character are the order of the day. For instance, there is no better Lenten amusement than the average *matinée* supplied with a piece written by "a new author," and played by a company of actors and actresses engaged in the familiar task of "resting."

On a recent occasion, I was honoured with an invitation to visit the Imperial Theatre to listen to a lecture upon Capital Punishment, delivered by no less a person than "the late Executioner of England."

My recollections of the Imperial Theatre Miss Litton at the Imperial Theatre. were pleasant ones. At my most recent visit, I had seen a hypnotist who performed some amusing feats (I do not think they were

tricks) to the great content of an overflowing audience. But my memory carried me back to a more remote date, when Miss Marie Litton was playing in "As You Like It." I have seen many Rosalinds in my time—Lady Martin, Mrs. Kendal, and Mrs. Langtry amongst the number—but, to my thinking, Miss Litton was the best of them. I had the honour of her acquaintance, and knew her to be a most charming and accomplished lady. She was exceedingly intelligent, and took infinite care in putting a comedy upon the stage. The fact that she was kind enough to play more than one of my pieces was a proof (to my mind) of her discrimination. But, leaving this out of consideration, she certainly made the fame of the Court Theatre. At the pretty playhouse in Sloane Square she produced original pieces by W. S. Gilbert, Walter Besant, Herman Merivale, and Palgrave Simpson, played by Hermann Vezin, Edgar Bruce, George Rignold, Edward Righton, H. J. Hill, and John Clayton, and Mrs. Stephens, Miss Kate Bishop, and Miss Lottie Venne. Miss Litton was a model actress-manageress. She never forced herself into a prominent character, but played the smallest part if she thought it suited her, and played it admirably. She had a keen sense of humour, and was quick to recognise a good idea. For instance, she saw the great possibilities of "The Wicked World" at a glance, and encouraged Mr. W. S. Gilbert to carry out his intention of burlesquing one of his own pieces.

A Story of
"The
Happy Land."
Time flies so fast that the story of the production of "The Happy Land" is becoming, if it has not already become, ancient history.

So it may be worth while to jot down a few particulars anent the incident to instruct young playgoers and revive the fading memories of their seniors. The author of the "Bab Ballads" had been writing a series of fairy comedies for the Haymarket, in which Buckstone, the Kendals, Howe, and other distinguished players had taken part. He produced there "The Palace of Truth," "The Wicked World," and "Pygmalion and Galatea," and it occurred to him to burlesque the second of the series. In the original three men are brought into Fairyland from "the wicked world," and introduce love, which ends in disaster. It was an intensely pathetic piece, and Mrs. Kendal was admirable as a fairy queen enthralled by a pure passion for an unworthy earthly lover. Mr. Gilbert did not want his name to appear to the burlesque of his own play, so he sought the assistance of a well-known humourist and dramatist, and between them they produced a most excellent parody. Mr. Gladstone was Premier at the time, and Mr. "Bob" Lowe and Mr. Ayrton were respectively Chancellor of the Exchequer and Commissioner of the Government Board of Works. They none of them were popular—the reputation of the Premier having been seriously damaged by the injudicious acts of his colleagues.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer was considered stingy, and the Commissioner of the Board of Works absolutely ignorant of the first principles of art. The idea was to bring these statesmen to Fairyland, to "improve it." The whole point of the fun was that the personalities of the statesmen should be recognised, and there was the difficulty. What would the Lord Chamberlain (represented by the Examiner of Plays) say to it? Political personages were forbidden on the stage; for Mr. Buckstone, at a Special Committee, had given in evidence that he himself had been prevented from impersonating Lord John Russell in a scene representing the interior of the House of Commons. So what was to be done? I have reasons for believing that a copy of "The Happy Land" was sent to the Examiner, written by a pen apparently wielded by a female hand. I have also been told that there was a pencil-mark beside a passage that might have been considered risky by an over-conscientious reader. I do not know whether the marked passage was altered, but it is common knowledge (as the lawyers would say) that "The Happy Land" was returned to the Court Theatre fully licensed.

I shall never forget the first night of the
"Making-up"
With and piece. I saw it from a top proscenium box
Without the in company with one of the authors. We
Lord were to have occupied the Royal Box, but
Chamberlain.

at the last moment a command came from Marlborough House, and the *loge* was retained for the Prince and Princess of Wales, who were accompanied by the Duke and Duchess of Gotha, then only Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh. Deprived of our original possession, we had to accept the only unoccupied places in the house. Things went smoothly until Messrs. Fisher, Hill, and Righton appeared "made up" exactly like Messrs. Gladstone, Lowe, and Ayrton, and danced a breakdown. Then the audience simply shouted, and the remainder of the piece went with a roar. The play at once was a gigantic success. But the Lord Chamberlain interfered, and after a run of two or three nights closed the theatre. It was reopened shortly afterwards on condition that the actors gave up their "make-ups." This they did willingly and without injury to the burlesque, because by this time all the world knew whom they were intended to represent. In the provinces the actors were less scrupulous in their "make-ups," and I cannot help fancying that this play had a good deal to do with the triumph of the Conservative Party which occurred at the next general election. By the way, this was the first appearance of the Gladstone collars. Mr. Walter Fisher, who played the part of the Grand Old Man (for even in those days the veteran statesman was worthy of the title), introduced "gills" of abnormal size. Mr. Ayrton, who had become unpopular by

interfering with art, was represented as ordering Fairy-land to be painted slate, as "a good wearing colour," and Mr. Lowe sang a song intimating that he "saved a penny here, saved a penny there, and here a penny, there a penny, everywhere a penny." The burlesque, from an election point of view, must have been invaluable to Lord Beaconsfield and his supporters.

Early History
of the
Court Theatre.

And as I am on the subject of the theatres during Lent, perhaps I may mention, influenced by an association of ideas, that the old Court Theatre was originally a chapel. It was purchased by an actor connected with the Grecian, and for some time used as a playhouse by those who refused to pay high prices. Then there was a plan to obtain it for the purpose of an amateur theatrical society, to be conducted on the lines of the A.D.C. at Cambridge; but before this idea was matured, Mr. W. Wybrow Robertson secured an interest in the site, pulled down the old building, and was instrumental in changing the chapel into a handsome West-end theatre. The same gentleman had also a great deal to do with the establishment of the Royal Westminster Aquarium, which was opened with great pomp by the Duke of Edinburgh, and promised at one time to rival any inland home of living fish in the kingdom. But, alas! science had to give way to sensation, and nowadays, to put it mildly, the fish at the Aquarium are quite a secondary con-

sideration. Mr. Robertson was also the founder of the Vaudeville Theatre, which was built on the site of the *Glow-worm* office, which, in its turn, had ousted a "judge and jury society."

An Hour's
Lecture from
a Public
Character.

Returning to the subject of the Hangman's lecture, I must say it was a little monotonous. The chair was taken by a member of the London County Council, and for some minutes (as I had never had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Berry either professionally or in a private capacity) I was not quite sure that the president who officiated was not the "late Executioner of England" himself. But he soon set our minds at rest by introducing the lecturer of the evening, who was seated on his left. Before the lecturer commenced reading a lengthy document upon the advisability of the abolition of Capital Punishment, the Chairman asked the indulgence of the audience for any shortcomings. This seemed to be unnecessary, as the lecturer performed his task very creditably. I was not unprepared to see him in mourning costume, as I had already received his visiting card with a thin black border. I was interested in his account of the lives of his predecessors in office. Some of them, it seems, had been pardoned murderers, and two of them, during the last century, were executed themselves. Mr. Berry spoke with dignity of the importance of the office he had just relinquished, and

was a little hard upon the Press for writing it down. He claimed for the hangman the status of a man and a brother, and really personally was not an unpleasant-looking individual. I am not quite sure that I should have enjoyed five minutes' chat with him on my road to any public function in which we might both have been the principal actors; but, under less serious circumstances, I have no doubt his reminiscences (which seem to have been varied) would have had the charm of novelty. For the rest, I am afraid the appeal made to the audience by the Chairman to sign a petition to the Home Secretary asking for the abolition of the Death Penalty had little effect, in spite of the fact that it was supported by an officer said to be a lieutenant in the U.S.A. Navy. As I left the theatre I noticed that the bulk of the meeting were bound for the Aquarium, where entertainments of a less gruesome character than lectures upon Capital Punishment, I have every reason for believing, awaited them.

“Boat-Race Night” at Evans’s.

WHEN Oxford meets Cambridge on the Thames, one’s thoughts naturally wander back to Evans’s, the respectable and harmonious, the home of glees and the haunt of grilled bones, chops, and hot potatoes. For, years ago, the ever famous supper-room was *the* place for the finish. “Boat-race night” was the “annual benefit” of Mr. “Paddy” Green, once the proprietor, and subsequently the manager, of the hall off Covent Garden Market. The anniversary always caused the good man pain. He was invariably fearful lest “the boys” should misbehave themselves. As a rule, the rooms were supplied with neat little tables and comfortable chairs; but on “Boat-race night” the floor was cleared of everything save a long rope, which, left (no doubt accidentally) in a corner, subsequently served as an admirable assistance in deciding “a tug of war.” If you met “Paddy” while the crews were practising, he would shake his head over the approaching “big night” and sigh. But, for all that, placards informed the *habitués* of the coming function; and the charge for admission, usually one shilling, was raised for the occasion to the abnormal price of half-a-crown.

Perhaps of all the men who lived in the days
"Paddy"
Green, Evans's
Representative. of our youth, "Paddy" was most suggestive
of the green-room. Everyone knew him,
and it was considered a great honour to have the
pleasure of his acquaintance. I was quite a lad when
I was presented to him. He immediately offered me
his snuff-box and asked tenderly after "those at home."
He was very proud of his connection with the boards.
He was the original watchman in "Tom and Jerry,"
and for years a member of the stock company at the
Old Adelphi—the Adelphi of Webster, Buckstone, and
Yates. He was wonderfully well up in the annals of
the West End of the town, and could give you the
history of every house in St. James—as the drill
sergeants say, "by numbers." He delighted in the
portraits of old actors that used to hang up in the *café*
part of the rooms, and I remember that he expressed
great regret when they were carried away to make room
for walls of looking-glass. About that time he had
ceased to have any real power in the management, and
the rooms were "run" by a wine merchant, who was
not particularly fortunate in the speculation. "Paddy"
was a strict Catholic, and several of his daughters were
Sisters in a convent. In spite of the suggestion that
Evans's was the original of the Cave of Harmony, to
which Colonel Newcome took such grave exception, I
never heard a word within its walls that would have
offended a saint, much less Mr. McDougall.

In its early days — some fifty or sixty years
Nights at the
 Round Tables. ago (long before my time)—Evans's consisted of a comparatively small room, which was always known as the *café*. Later on, rather before the time of the Crimean War, a long saloon was added, with a platform at the end, but until the last *habitués* never got beyond the initial chamber. In the *café* were tables that belonged to certain sets. For instance, at one time *Punch* had its table, and subsequently *Fun*. It was in the early days of the latter periodical, when H. J. Byron, Prowse, George Rose (Arthur Sketchley), Harry Leigh, Tom Hood, W. S. Gilbert, Andrew Halliday, and last, although I should have written first, F. C. Burnand were contributors. A little later these tables were dissolved, but one was kept to the last for the benefit of Lord Henry Lennox, Mr. Lionel Lawson, and Serjeant Ballantyne. They are all gone! The life and soul of them was the Serjeant. He had always a good story. I remember that during the Tichborne Trial a counsel, who had made his name notorious, was swaggering about the number of distinguished persons who had attended one of his receptions. "I give you my word, sir," said he, "that on the occasion in question there was a line of carriages from one end of our street to the other." "Of course there was," replied Ballantyne, "you live opposite a cab-stand!" A friend of mine, who was rather fond of boasting of his connection with the British Army, on the strength of being an

officer in the Militia, was one evening discussing the Indian Mutiny. Noticing that the Serjeant was smiling a trifle contemptuously, he turned upon him. "I dare say you think I know nothing about it," he said, rather angrily, "I tell you I was in Calcutta all through 1857; and yet you imagine I had nothing to do with the Indian Mutiny!" "Nothing to do with the Indian Mutiny!" repeated Ballantyne, with a drawl. "Why, my dear fellow, I believe you were the cause of it!" By an unwritten law, the tables in the *café* were reserved for the *habitués*, and if an outsider ventured to take possession of one, he soon found, by the inattention of the waiters and the rather too close attention of those about him, that he had made a mistake.

Song and
Supper.

The regulation entertainment at Evans's consisted of glees and occasional (very occasional) topical songs. Now and then there would be a ballad, when one of the men of the glee singers (the choir used, so to speak, to grow old before one's eyes—the lad who was alto one year would, five or six years later, appear as a bass of six feet high in the second row) would give us "The Wolf" or "The Village Blacksmith." The topical songs had invariably a Conservative bias. A gentleman of the name of Sydney used to tell us things in "a quiet sort of way," and recommend that we should allow "the world to jog along as it will," on the distinct understanding that we

"would be free and easy," repeated thrice. On "Boat-race" night Mr. Sydney was accompanied by a number of young men (supposed to be "'Varsity undergrads," as no doubt they would have styled themselves) on to the platform, where they insisted upon his accepting their spirituous hospitality. Reference to the victory of the day caused fights amongst the adherents of the rival blues. I suppose there were a few genuine University men present—possibly hailing from such distinguished colleges as Sydney Sussex, Worcester, and Wadham—but the vast majority were of the genus sweep. Poor "Paddy" used to wring his hands, turn up his eyes, and congratulate himself upon having removed breakables and charged half-a-crown for admission. "Paddy" hated innovations. When "the great Vance" was engaged for a turn (at a high salary) my old friend was in despair, and he never really cared for acrobats. One of the best known faces about the place was Herr Von Joel, a retired entertainer, who, according to the programme, was "retained on the strength of the establishment on account of his long and valuable services." This gentleman used to walk about selling cigars to those who were honoured with his acquaintance. On special occasions he would mount the platform and imitate the songs of birds with the assistance of a walking-stick. Shortly after the closing of Evans's the poor fellow was found dying in the snow in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Then another gentleman, Mr. Jongmanns,

who was once musical director at the Oxford, used occasionally to appear to sing such songs as "The Vagabond" in a fashion entirely his own. He used to tell us that he "was homeless, ragged, and tanned" as if it were one of the best stories he had ever heard. But the musical attraction of the place was the glee singing, with excellent interpretations of "The Men of Harlech," "The Hardy Norseman," and last, but not least, "The Chough and Crow." Still, I am afraid that music would have been scarcely enough without the supplementary attractions of devilled kidneys and potatoes in their jackets.

As I have written, in its original form the place was far from large. When the café was augmented the new building was never patronised by the *habitués*. The men about town to whom I have referred preferred to keep to their old quarters. Distance lent enchantment to the glees, and did not unduly interrupt the flow of chat. A good story would be told, or there would be a rapid exchange of chaff; and then would come a couple of minutes' pause for listening. But conversation and chops took precedence of harmony. The various musical items used to be called out, as "Number such a one in the Books." And the paper-covered volumes in question were very interesting. Not only were there the words of the songs, but frequently a brief biography of the composer headed

Chat and Chops
more
popular than
Harmony.

the extract. The place was first and foremost a spot for supper. No one thought of dining at Evans’s. So those who visited town fresh from the country stayed at the Hotel. At least they did until the Coffee Room became the temporary property of the Savage Club. When the Rooms disappeared, the Hôtel followed suit.

Decline and
Fall
of Evans’s.

By degrees Evans’s fell from its high estate. It was at one time almost as exclusive as a first-class club; gradually it sunk to the level of a fourth-rate music hall. Even its license was refused. Up to that date females (except a few who were allowed to visit some private boxes) had been rigidly excluded. Then the proprietor became reckless, and threw open the doors to both sexes. The intention was well advertised, and the representatives of what has been very aptly called the *jeunesse* (stage) *doré* rushed down to Covent Garden to see the fun. It was expected that the hall would be thronged with “all sorts and conditions” of persons. But the persons in question preferred more congenial haunts, and did not turn up. The only female present was the homely wife of a farmer, who was having supper with her husband, and who seemed greatly surprised at the interest that appeared to be taken in her movements by a number of lads young enough to be her children. Shortly afterwards Evans’s was closed (presumably) for ever. The building is now the National Sports Club.

Supper Time at "Evans's."

WHEN it became known that I was writing my "Green-Room Recollections" through an announcement in the Press, I was deluged with numberless letters from kindly correspondents, calling my attention to this and that. I knew that the public of twenty years ago loved the old hall under the level of Covent Garden Market, yclept "Evans," but I had no idea of the strength of their affection. I have received scores of communications about the still remembered institution. "Old Stagers," "Older Stagers," and "Oldest Stagers" have furnished me with unlimited "copy." Judging from the addresses and names of those who have been kind enough to write to me, Evans's seems to be held in high esteem by clergymen and members of the medical profession. Some of the latter have suggested the advisability of extending my recollections further afield in the neighbourhood of Covent Garden, and further West, but I must leave the task to more experienced pens. I confess I had no liking for such places as the "Pic" and the "Duke's," and only once was present at the meeting of a Judge and Jury Society.

Attentions of
Unknown
Friends.

About
Judges and
Juries.

And this reminds me that the occasion had its comic side. In those days I was very young, and very enthusiastic, and was for the nonce a fierce reformer. I was connected with a paper that was severely virtuous, and had made up its editorial mind to put down all that was wrong. A Judge and Jury Society had recently got into trouble with the magistrate at Marlborough Street Police Court, and it occurred to me as I was walking through Leicester Square one evening that here was an opportunity for a regular first-rate, hammer-and-tongs, down-like-a-load-of-bricks "slasher." Photographs of the period tell me that in those days I was a mild-looking youth, and in that character I presented myself at the doors of the entertainment and paid for admission. A waiter suggested that for a consideration he could introduce me to life behind the scenes, but I sternly refused, as I was aware that the trials were combined with *poses plastiques*, and, *qua* reforming journalist, I had no wish to make the acquaintance of a number of ladies of mature years and long-established obesity. So I was shown into a room where a trial was in merry progress. I was evidently "spotted" at once, for suddenly all laughter ceased. The proceedings, after my entrance, were of the most dismally decorous character, and every now and then the judge would call attention to the harmlessness of the entertainment, and (with a look at me) beg a notice from the Press. This at first seemed to surprise the

remainder of the audience (four or five dissipated-looking men about town), until a wink from the counsel for the prosecution and a glance at me seemed to explain matters.

A Letter from
Mr. Edmund
Yates.

And now to return to Evans's. A great deal has been written about the identity of "The Coal Hole," as drawn by Thackeray, and more than one of my correspondents has referred to the singing of "Sam Hall." One of my "old stagers," after congratulating me on "the robustness of the saints of my acquaintance," asks me "If I have ever heard Ross sing or recite at Evans's 'Sam Hall,' who, on his road up Holborn Hill to Tyburn, took the cake for blasphemy?" Well, no, I never did; and, what is more, the tragic ditty was never heard there. My much lamented friend, the late Mr. Edmund Yates, wrote to me as follows:—" 'Sam Hall' was sung by Ross at the Cider Cellars, not at Evans's. With Thackeray the 'Cave of Harmony' stood for Evans's, and in the first chapter of 'The Newcomes' for the Coal Hole; the Back Kitchen was the Cider Cellars. Paddy Green was at one time in the chorus of the Adelphi in my father's management." I was greatly indebted to Mr. Yates for his note. I remember Paddy telling me that he was in the original cast of "Tom and Jerry," when he played the part of a watchman. Possibly he was selected because he had to sing "Past twelve—a starry

night and a bright morning." And this reminds me of an old song I remember as a lad that was said to have once been a part of the repertoire of Braham. A Romeo was bidding a Juliet "adieu," amidst the interruptions of the guardian of the night. It ran as follows:—

Good night, good night, my dearest,
How fast the moments fly,
'Tis time to part; thou hearest
That hateful watchman's cry—
"Past twelve!" Good night.
"Past twelve!" Good night.

Yet cast this cloak about thee,
The hours will sure go wrong;
For when they are spent without thee,
They are just twice as long.
"Past one!" Good night.
"Past one!" Good night.

Nay, stay one moment longer,
Alas! why is it so?
The wish to stay grows stronger
The more 'tis time to go!
"Past two!" Good night.
"Past two!" Good night.

Again that hateful warning,
Sure time had ne'er such flight;
And see the sky } 'tis morning!
So now, indeed, "Good night."
"Past three!" Good night.
"Past three!" Good night.

I have had the advantage of receiving a letter from a gentleman who appropriately signs himself "A Very Old Stager." I quote from his communication several items which are of no little interest. He says of Evans's Supper Rooms:—"I made the acquaintance of that subterranean resort more than fifty years ago, my first visit having been in the year 1843. 'Evans's, late Joy's,' was the legend outside

The Rise of
Evans's.

under the Piazzas, and many were the jokes made thereon, as the joys certainly were late, or rather early, two o'clock being the clearing hour. At the time I speak of there was a veritable Evans, the landlord, who used to sing 'The Englishman,' and 'If I had a Thousand a Year,' and songs of a similar character. He was a bluff, fresh-coloured man, with whitish hair, and had rather a bullying way with the waiters. Paddy Green was the chorus master, and comparatively unknown to the general public until later years, when he took the hotel after Evans's death. The book of the words of the glees, &c., contained some interesting antiquarian notes, which Paddy Green, whom I knew intimately, and many of whose letters I have still by me, asked me to read through before publication, a compliment which as a young man I appreciated highly. He was a good musician, and when Mendelssohn's music to 'Antigone' (in which Henry Vanderhoff and his daughter took the principal parts) was played at Covent Garden, Paddy trained the chorus. I think he also superintended the chorus when the 'Midsummer Night's Dream' was given at the same theatre under Madame Vestris's management, but of this I don't feel quite sure."

The following gives a very good idea of the
The End of Evans's, gradual fall of Evans's from its high estate.

It is from the pen of a writer who knows his subject thoroughly well :—"After some time abroad I

revisited the old place, and found Sam Cowell, prince of music-hall artists and an actor. His 'Life and Death of Bloody Bold Macbeth,' 'Alonzo the Brave and the Fair Imogene,' and 'Hamlet,' I hope to remember till I die. Each verse a different air, and all going as only an actor could make them go. His ghost scene in Macbeth, for example, when seeing the ghost and throwing his long hair over his face, the man is a cowering coward; but the ghost being gone, his jaunty 'But, being gone, I am a man again.' Ah me!!! I don't go much to music halls, but, odd to say, I think there was talent in the olden days. As for his Hamlet, was there ever anything half so quaint as the rhyming:—

A hero's life I'll sing, his story shall my pen mark,
He was not the king, but 'Amlet, Prince of Denmark.
His mammy, she was young, the crown she'd set her eyes on,
Her husband stopped her tongue, *she* stopped his ears with *pison*.

Again, after a longish interval, I returned to the old place. The little low room where I, if you please, used to eat 'Welsh rabbits' had given place to the big hall—women were in the boxes, the place, as compared to the old place, was a sham, *but* the men's and the boys' voices to the last were the same, and, looking back to these old places and others that were then going, I fancy the present music-hall artist and *entrepreneur* might learn something to his advantage by harking back a bit." And so do I. Nowadays the excellent selections that were so marked a feature in the past are nearly always conspicuous by their absence in the programmes of the present.

The
Cider Cellars
in 1849.

The other day I was looking through the pages of "Mr. Pipp's Diary," by the late Percival Leigh (the Professor of the *Punch* table), and came upon the following description of "Sam Hall" and the Cider Cellars:—"To supper at the Cider Cellars in Maiden Lane, wherein was much company, great and small, and did call for kidneys and stout, and then a small glass of *aqua vitæ* and water, and thereto a cigar. While we supped, the Singers did entertain us with Glees and Comical Ditties, but Lack to hear with what little Wit the young Sparks about Town are tickled! But the Thing that did most take me was to see and hear one Ross sing the Song of 'Sam Hall,' the Chimney-Sweep, going to be hanged; for he had begrimed his Muzzle, to look unshaven, and in rusty black Clothes, with a battered old Hat on his Crown, and a short Pipe in his Mouth, did sit upon the Platform, leaning over the back of a Chair, so making believe that he was on his way to Tyburn. And then he did sing, to a dismal Psalm-Tune, how that his name was Sam Hall, and that he had been a great Thief, and was now about to pay for all with his Life; and thereupon he swore an Oath which did make me somewhat shiver, though divers laugh. Then in so many Verses, how his Master had badly taught him, and now he must hang for it; how he should ride up to Holborn Hill in a Cart, and the Sheriffs would come, and then the Parson, and preach to him, and after them would come

the Hangman; and at the End of each Verse he did repeat his Oath. Last of all, how that he should go up to the Gallows; and desired the Prayers of his Audience. And ended by cursing them all round. Methinks it had been a Sermon to a Rogue to hear him, and I wish it may have done good to some of the Company. Yet was his cursing very horrible, albeit to not a few it seemed a high Joke, but I do doubt that they understood the Song, and did only relish the oaths. Strange to think what a Hit this Song of 'Sam Hall' hath made, and how it hath taken the Town, and how popular it is, not only among Tavern Haunters and Frequenters of Night Houses, but also with the Gentry and the Aristocracy, who do vote it a Thing that ought to be heard though a blackguard, and look in at the Cider Cellars by Night after Dinner at their Clubs to hear it sung." So wrote my dear old friend Percival Leigh forty years ago. I remember, only a few months before his lamented death, "the Professor" talking about this very song and recalling its horrors. He considered it a sermon, and so it was. One of my correspondents, who speaks of the time with the pardonable indulgence that age bestows upon the excesses of youth, admits that, although he laughed, he was in truth terribly frightened. The correspondent (a "Very Old Stager") from whom I have already quoted, says he remembers Ross very well. He continues: "He had undoubted ability of a sort, and used to sing at Vauxhall Gardens. The last I heard of

him was as a super in the Lord Mayor's Show. Charles Sloman, 'the only English improvisatore,' as he styled himself, I also knew, and wondered how the public could be so easily amused by his doggerel verses on any of the audience he selected at the moment. He wrote, however, one pretty little thing, 'No more shall the children of Judah sing the lays of a happier time;' which was profanely parodied into 'No more shall the chilblains of Judah sting, we'll soak 'em in strong turpentine.'"

During the writing of my Recollections a
"The
Calculating
Waiter."
number of correspondents wrote to me on the
subject of the waiter with the fatal facility
for adding up bills on (what I may term) the decimal
principle. "Twenty-six pence, sir! Yes, sir, that will
be two-and-sixpence. Thirty-four pence, sir! Yes,
that will be three-and-fourpence, sir," and the like.
Now it seems that there is no doubt that an "adder-up"
did exist. But there is a conflict of testimony as to this
"adder-up's" honesty. Some declare that they have
been fleeced by him, and could even now pick him out
of a hundred. He is said to have been short, sturdy,
and florid, with an ugly scar on the forehead, caused by
a blow with a soda-water bottle, given by a supper eater
who took exception to his "totalling," or, to give
another version, from a kick of a horse. He is said to
have been also (on occasions) a useful "chucker-out."
Some of my correspondents insist that he was dishonest,

others that he was chivalrously correct in his accounts. "Why, sir," writes one of my friends, "I have known him say 'All right, sir,' when I have told him that I will pay him on some future occasion." Then my correspondent devoutly thanks Providence that he had never abused his confidence. "I paid for my supper to the very last penny," writes my friend, with a pride fully justified by his ultra-scrupulous regard for perfect honesty. Several other gentlemen assure me that they never found his totals incorrect, even when their bills contained several items for whisky-and-water. So I think we ought to give the waiter the benefit of the doubt. But he had certainly one very pleasant point. If he knew you, you could always borrow a "fiver" or a "tenner" from him. You gave him an I O U and mentioned the date of the money's return. "Very good, sir," he replied, and trusted entirely to your generosity for the return of principal and interest. The latter took the shape of a gratuity, the amount of which was fixed by yourself. *À propos* of the scar on his head, one correspondent writes: "He was frequently joked about it. I remember hearing a gentleman, who was reciting the items of refreshments he had had, finish up with 'hole in head.' Waiter continued, 'Hole in head is., yes, sir, 4s. 6d. Waiter, sir?' This is a fact." I have carefully avoided mentioning the name of this individual for two reasons. If he is alive, with the libel laws before us, we should be discreet; if he be dead, "*de mortuis nil nisi bonum.*"

The Dear Old "Poly."

Professor
Pepper at the
Polytechnic.

WHEN Professor Pepper produced his ghost at the Polytechnic, that cleverly-contrived phantom used to take part in many a soul-stirring drama. No doubt when unoccupied on the mirror this scientific goblin, or rather its human counterpart, took refuge in the green-room. So, taking all things into consideration, I do not see why I should not include remembrances of the Polytechnic amongst my recollections.

The
Inaccuracies
of Science.

Looking back, the first impression I call to mind is the scientific lecture. It was generally held in "the small theatre" of the institution, and I remember that when you entered you generally found something in a glass tube boiling over a spirit lamp. Then there were a black board, some mysterious jars, a table, and a faint odour of ether. The lecturer appeared usually wearing a tail-coat over morning dress, and attended by an "assistant" in a chocolate uniform. The lecture was of a scientific character, but we youngsters used to treat it with scant attention until the lecturer, with the aid of his assistant,

did something or other that was followed by a display of sparks and a bang. This brilliant experiment was kept until the last, possibly because its execution was accompanied by a pungent and disagreeable perfume that aided materially to clear the theatre. A story is told (but I cannot vouch for its truth) that on one occasion a lecturer was delivering a lecture while suffering from what I have heard described as a temporary aberration of intellect. I am not aware of the cause of his ailment, but two of its distressing symptoms were unsteadiness on the legs and thickness of utterance. "Ladies and gen'men," he is reported to have said, "I've here two glass jars—yes, two glass jars. Ver' good, ladies and gen'men—ver' good. Now s'pose—I say, now s'pose—I put lighted taper in this jar. No bad effect! Pufectly inockious—should say innocuous. But mustn't put lighted taper in this jar! No, mustn't—if did, blow place to atoms! Highly 'spositive gas!—should say explosive gas. Ladies and gen'men, now put taper in inockious—should say innocuous gas, and put it out. Quite safe, 'sure you." The legend says that the unfortunate scientist, in the temporary agitation of the moment, put the lighted candle into the wrong jar—with results! But I have never quite believed this story, as all the lecturers at the Polytechnic were the most sedate and learned of gentlemen, and quite unlikely to suffer from the mysterious ailment to which incidentally I have called

attention. No doubt the lecture with disastrous results must have been given at Little Pedlington.

Lecturing
under
Difficulties.

But perhaps the most painful recollection I have of the place is one that dates back to the Christmas Holidays very many years ago. The boys were home for the vacation, and I in those distant days was one of the boys. It used to be our delight, and I confess it with shame, to attend the Polytechnic with a view to improving the elocution of the lecturer when he was engaged in describing the Dissolving Views. We used to get into the front row of the gallery, where we were safe from interruption, and keep our faces perfectly placid and good. I remember an old lady in the second row patting me on the head and saying: "Dear little fellow; he looks like an angel." And possibly I did. Then the light used to be excluded by means of a screen drawn over a window in the ceiling, and we were left in darkness. Then the lecturer used to appear at a rostrum with a strong shaded light that brilliantly illuminated his features, leaving the audience in the deepest shadow. He would begin: "Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to show you some pictures this afternoon of Rome." Applause followed this announcement, and he would continue: "Rome, the city of the Popes and the Cæsars, has often been called—Oh!" He would pause for a moment, as if overcome with emotion, and begin

again. "The population of Rome has been estimated at—Oh!" Again he would utter a strange moan and look up towards the gallery. "Some of our young friends are rather lively to-day, and—Oh!" I am ashamed to admit that by this time we had got his range, and were pouring missives from our pea-shooters with disgraceful taste but admirable precision. The lecture used to continue with these interruptions until we had got through the treasures of the Vatican and the glorious ruins of ancient Rome. Then we were restored to daylight, when my kind old woman used to ask her "angel" if he had enjoyed himself. "Yes, if you please, ma'am; very much indeed," I would reply, and walk away, looking the very picture of innocence. On one occasion I remember we introduced pellets of clay, and had a shot at the ghost illusion, with the result that when the phantom disappeared, he left a small daub of earth in the spot which he had occupied. I quite confess this conduct was simply disgraceful, and I am happy to believe that my own children are infinitely better behaved than I was at their age. This is as it should be, and marks the strides that have recently been taken in the march of civilisation.

Occasionally the lecturer was a professional
"Bringing it in Somehow," humourist, and then we had comic songs.

If my memory does not play me false, both
Mr. George Grossmith and Mr. Lal Brough have before

now appeared before a Polytechnic audience. And this reminds me that I once had the pleasure of being present at a lecture upon "The Castles of Scotland," given by an actor now, I fear, no more. It was not delivered at the Polytechnic, but, to the best of my recollection, at the Coliseum. It was really a most interesting paper, and the "illuminated illustrations" (as I notice Mr. Berry, the late executioner, calls the pictorial accessories to his condemnation of capital punishment) were admirable. I had been thoroughly enjoying a view of Stirling Castle, when I noticed that its place on the screen had been taken by a good specimen of some ecclesiastical architecture. "This," said the lecturer, "is not, strictly speaking, a Castle of Scotland, because, as a matter of fact, it is a view of Canterbury Cathedral. Now, Canterbury Cathedral is chiefly remembered as the scene of the murder of Thomas à Becket, the haughty Archbishop of Canterbury in the time of King Henry the Second. Thomas was not only haughty but exceedingly irritable, and no doubt this infirmity was one of the causes that led to his assassination. He was indeed most irritable, and that reminds me that I have a song which in modern guise will exactly express his leading characteristics." The lecturer then sang a ditty of up-to-date comic adventure, which he told us was called "The Irritable Man." And I regret to say that this item in the entertainment "went" better than all the rest.

Homage
to
The Press.

Later on, a friend of mine, whose name will ever be associated with the happiest of "happy thoughts," used to accompany me to the Polytechnic, and when these visits occurred, on the following week "comic copy" anent the institution used to be plentiful in the pages of certain periodicals. The lecturer, a most amiable gentleman, got to know us by sight, and when he saw us enter "the large theatre" used (I fancy) to modify his paper in a way calculated to disarm "chaff." On one occasion there had been some high-class singing by a troupe of vocalists who had given us some excellent glees. By a mis-calculation the programme was not quite long enough to fill up the time it was intended to occupy in the afternoon's entertainment. There was an awkward pause, when the Professor (all the lecturers were "professors") came to the rescue. "Ladies and gentlemen," said he, "a glance at your programme will reveal to you the cause of this delay. However, that you may not be disappointed, Mr. So-and-So, of the Royal Academy of Music, has kindly consented to sing a comic." Then the speaker recognised my friend and I seated in the front row, and corrected himself: "I should say, a rather humorous song!" He courteously left it to us, as facetious experts, to decide whether it were comic or not!

Then there was an outside lecturer, who
The
Glass-Blowing
Profession. attempted to combine business with instruction. He used to give an extempore oration on the beauties and mysteries of glass-blowing between the regular items of the programme. The moment the crowd poured into the Central Hall, this worthy person used to commence turning his wheel and speaking something after this fashion: "Ladies and gentlemen, —The art of glass-blowing may be very ancient—Yes, ma'am, imitation skein of silk, twopence—and, no doubt, was known to the Egyptians—Pair of toy candlesticks, a shilling and upwards, according to size—and nowadays most beautiful objects—Bird o' Paradise, three-and-six—can be made. It has been said that even wigs have been constructed out of blown glass—Ship in full sail, a guinea, shade and stand included—and it is very likely that this is the case—Now then, you children, leave that glass dog alone—and at Venice glass is used extensively as mosaics—Yes, ma'am, the windmill *is* for sale," and so on. There was also a gentleman, who used to carve roses and other flowers out of pieces of cardboard, who occasionally took to "orating;" but the blower, I fancy, looked down upon him as a pushing outsider.

The Last
of the
Polytechnic. My last visit to the Polytechnic was made under the following circumstances. A sister of mine had returned from India, and was

very anxious to see the place she remembered in her childhood, but to which she had not been for many years. She begged me not to miss a single item in the programme. We arrived, consequently, punctually at 12 noon, but found no one to take our money. However, an attendant without a coat kindly consented to sit at the seat of custom, and gave us admission after we had paid our shillings. Literally, there was not a soul in the place, except a gentleman who was holding a pleasant conversation with a comely damsel presiding over a jar of barley-sugar and some sponge-cakes. He looked at us and then spoke to the assistant, who had once more taken off his coat and was hard at work polishing the glass disc of an electrical machine. The assistant came to me and asked me "what we pleased to want?" I replied promptly "The entertainment." This seemed, so to speak, to "stump" the assistant, who went back to the gentleman chatting with the comely damsel for further instructions. He soon returned, and said: "Mr. — presents his compliments, and says, sir, you are the only persons here; so, if you look down this list, he will give you any entertainment you like to select." And the man produced a sort of scientific bill-of-fare. I consulted with my sister, and we came to the conclusion that we would like to hear a lecture upon "The Russo-Turkish War." This desire was conveyed to the lecturer, who gave a little nod and disappeared. The assistant beckoned us

to follow him, and showed us into reserved seats in the large theatre of the institution. We were absolutely, literally and truly, the only people in the place !

The lecturer began, "Lady and Gentleman,"
An Audience
of Two. and then described a number of incidents in

the late war, accompanied by "music by the band" and pictures on the disc. Now and again he would apologise for not touching upon politics, &c. "It would be manifestly in bad taste," he would say, "to discuss questions of this kind in a company so mixed as that I have the honour of seeing before me." I need scarcely say we roared at these points of the entertainment, but applauded whenever there was an opportunity. I said half aloud that I was sorry that the lecturer had not introduced some reference to torpedoes, which were then just attracting attention, and my remark was overheard. "I may say," said our kindly Professor, in a tone half-confidential, half-official, "that I have a short lecture upon torpedoes that I would be pleased to deliver if any here present would like to hear it." Then he paused, but my sister proposing that we "must get home to lunch," he continued : "But perhaps, on reconsideration, that most interesting subject may be reserved for some future occasion." He conscientiously delivered the lecture, and wound up by thanking us for our kind attention. From the first to last he preserved his dignity without once yielding

to a smile, and my heart smote me as I fancied I recognised in his aged features the face that in years gone by had served as a target when I not only possessed a pea-shooter, but knew how to use it. Poor fellow! shortly afterwards the Polytechnic closed—apparently for ever, in its old form. As for my sister and myself, we left the theatre to the strains of "God Save the Queen" played in rather quicker time than usual on a piano, a violin, a cornet, and a flute. I cannot help regretting the old place. When all was said and done, it really was a very excellent entertainment.

From Far West to Nearer East.

The
Waste Land
at
Earl's Court. THE waste land, or rather what used to be waste land, in the neighbourhood of the Earl's Court Railway Station, before becoming the Indian Exhibition was occupied by Buffalo Bill and his troupe of Braves. The celebrated American Colonel, who saw so much service on the other side of the Atlantic, was ready to give an adventurous side to an exhibition then devoted to horticulture. To a great extent his entertainment was a novelty. We have had hippodromes before and Indians before, but never in exactly the same combination. So, perhaps, it may not be out of place to jot down at random a few recollections conjured up by the latest development of our American cousin, the enterprising Cody.

But first about the site to which I have referred as "waste land," or, rather, what used to be "waste land." It is practically a mass of odds and ends. It would not be easy just at present to build over it to the entire satisfaction of the public, and so the powers that be have done wisely in letting it to a syndicate. Within measurable distance is that piece of ground purchased

by the painter Turner, which, considered valueless when acquired, subsequently realised an enormous fortune, and nearer still is the few hundred yards of the iron road known as *Punch's* Railway.

I have a very indistinct recollection of "the
A Prosperous
 Line. smallest line in the world," but I know that
 it ruined our garden. For this crime my
 father turned on to it a flood of ridicule that nearly
 swamped the undertaking. It was not very clear where
 it came from, or whither it went ; but that the sleepers
 invaded our flower-beds is only too certain. So week
 after week in the columns of *Punch* there was a diary
 of doings in connection with the Kensington Railway.
 The gradual decay of the cabstand was recorded. I
 fancy three cabs started on the opening day, then a
 couple, and, lastly, one. After a while the driver took
 the horse away, leaving the cab as the solitary reminder
 of what had been. Ultimately even this was removed,
 and the railway was left in the occupation of the station-
 master, who was declared to be a grower of cabbages
 on the soil of the six-foot way ! And it was this very
 railway which now, I fancy, yields something like cent.
 per cent. I have heard that it still exists as an in-
 dependent corporation, and that the right of way apper-
 taining to it is leased to a number of railway companies
 using Addison Road as a station.

I have said North American Indians are not new, and certainly there are many stories about their characteristics. One tale I have heard told may or may not be true, but it is worth repeating. An American lecturer introduced a couple of tribes to the public, one of the tribes only arriving as the curtain rose. "Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "here you see before you one of the most peaceful and intelligent races of man on the face of the earth. They are called the Lack Jaws. I will now introduce a tribe that I am told come from the same part of the country. They are equally peaceable and equally intelligent. They are called Kow Wows. Ladies and gentlemen, the Kow Wows!" Upon this six burly men carrying tomahawks appeared and gazed listlessly at the audience. Suddenly they caught sight of their fellow Indians, who sprang to their feet. Then both tribes brandished their hunting knives, yelled a war-whoop, and fell upon one another. The lecturer had forgotten that the rival tribes were at war when far away at home!

Another troupe of savages appeared as the Walpole Islanders at the Panopticon in Leicester Square. I remember securing a front seat as a boy, and when the fierce-looking creatures jumped into the ring I (and the greater part of the audience) disappeared into the background. The Panopticon was a rival to the Polytechnic, and was the original

A Question
of Race.

The
Panopticon.

name of the Alhambra. How it gradually dropped science and took to dancing I do not know, but I remember that even in the days of long ago the Panopticon used to be more light-hearted in its management than its sober-sensed senior. It was at this temporary home of science that the illuminated fountains, subsequently so great a feature at South Kensington, were introduced. About this time there was a rival attraction at the Polytechnic called (I think) Perkins' Steam Gun. This latter was the germ of the repeating rifles, the Gatlings, and the Nordenfelts. I think it fired 120 shots a minute. And that reminds me that the first rough notion of the telephone was also exhibited at the Polytechnic. An orchestra was stationed in the cellars, and then long deal wands were laid on the sounding boards of the instruments and "produced" until they reached the auditorium. The receivers of the wands were the sounding boards of violins. Thinking it over since, I fancy that the Royal Polytechnic Institution must have been slightly in advance of the time.

The
Hippodrome
of 1851.

To return to the Hippodrome proper. There was certainly such a place in 1851. It occupied the ground now filled by Prince of Wales Terrace and De Vere Gardens. It was highly popular with visitors to the first of the great International Exhibitions—the initial Crystal Palace—a part of which still exists at Sydenham as one of the smaller

transepts. No doubt the programme of entertainments was framed on the play-bill of its Parisian counterpart. We had chariot races, vaulting, and balloons. I remember on one occasion there was a terrible accident. In a very high wind two aëronauts determined to make an ascent, with disastrous results. The balloon lurched about in the circle, then caught in a high pole, causing a large rent to appear in the silk, and bounded away towards the houses. In those days South Kensington had no existence. Hyde Park Gate and Gloucester Road, with a few houses known as Kensington New Town, were all the bricks and mortar between the Kensington Gardens and Chelsea. But, unfortunately, the balloon managed to bound upon a house, and its occupants were thrown out and killed.

But the feature of the Hippodrome was the
^A
Procession. meeting of Henry VIII. and François I. on
the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Of course,
this display exhausted the entire strength of the company. The French monarch had in his train several curious animals. If my memory does not play me false, he had picked up in the course of his travels a zebra, several bears, and a giraffe. But the jesters were on both sides distinctly British-born. The action of the play or incident was very simple. Henry expressed delight at meeting François. Then they embraced, and seated themselves upon a sofa under a canopy to witness

sports of a miscellaneous character. Every afternoon the place used to be crowded, and one day my two elder brothers were in the front row and blocked up. They had an order for the play ("not admitted after seven o'clock"), and consequently it was of great importance to them to get away. They could not go out by the doors, because the benches were crowded, so they resolved to make their exit *viâ* the arena. They vaulted over the partition, and marched in the train of Henry VIII. until they found themselves in the Kensington Road. Their progress must have looked rather odd from the front, but not much stranger than the French King's menagerie.

Circus
Clowns.

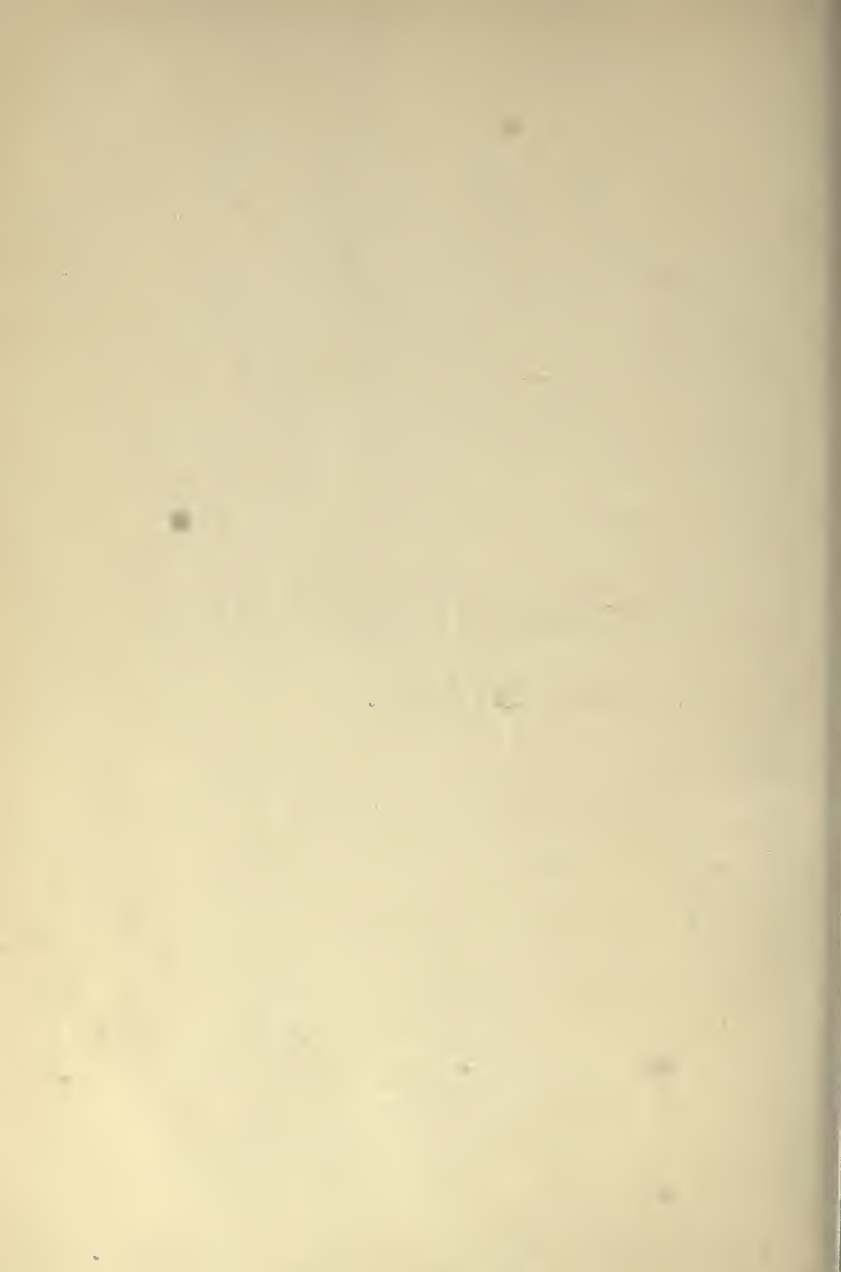
I have known many kinds of clowns. The earliest was the Shakesperian jester, who, before you knew where you were, indulged in a quotation from "Hamlet." He invariably reminded me of "Mr. Johnson," the centre man or interlocutor of the Christy Minstrels, in costume. He was treated with a certain respect by the Ring Master, who seldom or never struck him with his whip. Then there was the vaulting clown, who could play on the violin as a supplementary accomplishment. Then there was the clown of the "Little Sandy" variety, who was really witty. The newest of the drolls is the gentleman in burlesque evening dress, who attempts to help everyone and in reality does nothing. But, of course, at the

Hippodrome the clowns had to trust more to their antics than their voices. Like good children, they would be seen without being heard.

Most of our London theatres at one time or another have been used as a circus. In the thirties (I find from old play-bills) a gentleman of the name of La Porte converted Drury Lane into a Hippodrome. He was not very popular with the Press, and his "stud of trained steeds" were invariably mentioned as "that collection of living cats'-meat." Of course, Astley's was the home of the equestrian drama, and it was there that Ducrow gave that wonderful piece of advice that has been since published nearly as frequently as the *Punch* suggestion about matrimony. To quote Mr. Barlow, "as some of my readers may not have heard it," I venture to repeat it. An ambitious actor in the North had a benefit, and in that character possessed a right to choose his own piece. He selected "Hamlet." Ducrow, who had never seen the tragedy, attended the rehearsal and listened for ten minutes. Then he rose in the pit and cried, "Oh! I say, the audience won't stand *that* sort of thing! Just cut the cackle and come to the horses!"



THE BUSINESS OF THE
STAGE.



The Business of the Stage.

NOVEL *VERSUS* PLAY.

THE CAREER OF "A PLAY-BILL JOURNAL."
ROUND ABOUT KING STREET, COVENT
GARDEN.

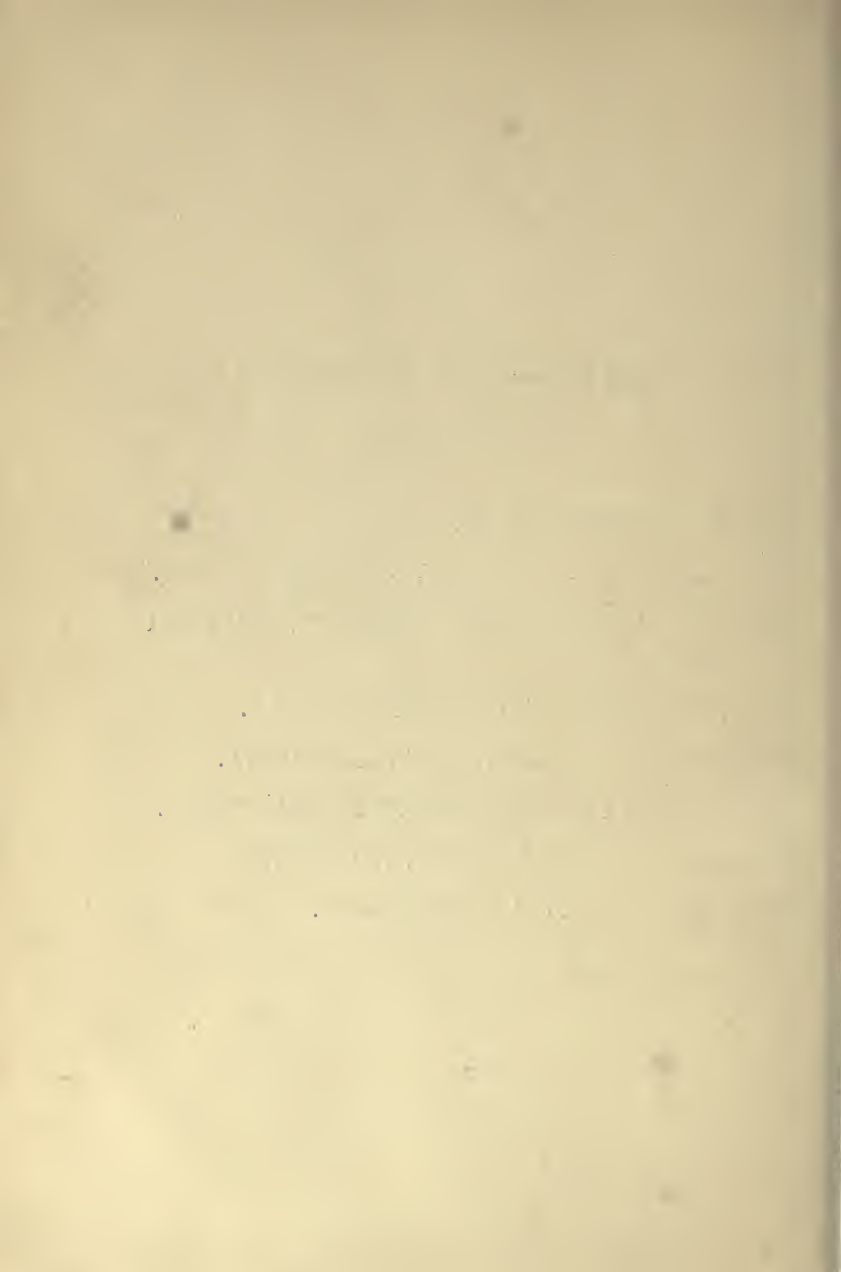
THE DRAMATIC AUTHORS' SOCIETY.

A SHORT AND MERRY MANAGEMENT.

"PASSIONATE BROMPTON" DRAMATISED.

HOW TO CONCILIATE AN AUDIENCE.

PEN AND PAINT AT THE PLAY.



Novel *versus* Play.

Converting a
Romance into
a Drama.

THE general impression seems to be that if a man can write a novel he is on that account unable to carve out of it a comedy or a drama. Well, there is something in the idea, but not much. I can write with some little authority on the subject, as years ago I dramatised several of my own stories, and, so far as Press notices were concerned, entirely to the satisfaction of the critics. Looking back at my own experience, it seems to me that the great difficulty is to get away from one's self—to treat one's own work with a free hand. If you take a collaborator, as Dickens took Wilkie Collins, you are pretty certain of obtaining this desirable result. In fact, you require an editor if you cannot edit yourself. The process of converting a story into a piece is not difficult if you set to work about it with a little attention to dramatic as distinguished from story-telling effect. I will take an instance from my own personal recollection—I was the author of the story and the author of the piece—two single gentlemen rolled into one.

How to Write
a Story.

It was not a very ambitious effort—the story was very short, and the play in one act. It came about in this way. The Editor of a magazine wanted a tale of twenty pages or so for a

Christmas number. I hunted for an idea, and struck upon the notion of a mother, the keeper of a gambling-house, nursing her son through an illness in the midst of her shameful surroundings. That was the first rough suggestion. Thought out, the plot took this shape: The mother had been separated from her husband, the son had been brought up in ignorance of his mother's degradation. More, the boy had been taught by the father to believe that his mother had died young after living the life of a saint. End of the piece—death of the mother. Cause of death, heart disease. Well, the story was plain sailing. Description of gambling quarter of Paris. House (residence of the mother) suspected by the police. This leading up to the interior of the house. Then the story. Young sailor had been taken in after a wild night of dicing. The keeper of the gambling-house for some unknown reason (maternal instinct, of course) nurses the boy instead of having him, so to speak, "chucked out," to find his way to the Morgue *viâ* the Seine. By degrees she recognises her son, and, learning that he is ignorant of her degradation, dies. My story was composed two-thirds description to one-third dialogue.

How to
Dramatise a
Novelette.

On reading my story in its completed form, it struck me it would not make a bad one-act play. So I went to work in this way. Four characters were quite enough. Gambling-house ser-

vant to clear up *débris* of night's debauch, doctor guardian of son, mother keeping gambling-house and our young midddy. Scene: Morning in the gambling-house. Servant enters. "Rough night again; it's wonderful how Madame can tend that young Englishman all day and play all night." Enter English doctor in search of son. He has traced him to the gambling-house. Mother is introduced, and doctor recognises her. She in her turn finds that she has been tending her own son. "I shall claim him," says the mother. "Better not," says doctor, "he thinks you are dead, and you had better not undeceive him. He is going to be married to a virtuous young lady; and if you turn up now, your appearance may lead to complications." Trifling better language was used in the play; but that was the idea. "All right," says the mother, "I defy you. I shall tell him." "Very well," replies the doctor. "It's your affair, not mine. I'm off for a stroll. Good-bye. Back directly." "Oh!" cries the mother, with her hand to her heart. "What's that?" asks doctor. "Nothing," returns mother. "More serious than she thinks," asides doctor, and exit. Mother brings in son. Affecting interview. She having found him in a gambling-house, tells him of the horrors of play. She learns that all his faults have, more or less, been caused by her desertion of him. He has one restraining influence. He has learned to love the memory of his mother, and, believing that she watches over him in Heaven, doesn't want to pain her

by his misconduct. Then mother learns for the first time that her husband has spared her. She finds it difficult to claim her son. She begins. She paints her own life. Had he such a mother, what would he think of her? He would loathe her! Then the mother decides to let the boy know nothing of the past. I worked it out so that the son should unconsciously pardon his mother's wrong-doing. Then I brought on my doctor. "Have you told him?" "No, he must never know." "He shall never know." "Thanks—Oh!" Of course, heart disease. Mother dies in her son's arms, happy in the knowledge that he is going to be married and live in bliss for ever afterwards.

"Oh, doctor, doctor, she has fainted!" "No, Frank, she is dead!" Curtain. And how was it done? As simple as possible. In the story I allowed the reader to learn by degrees the relationship existing between the mother and the son. In the play I brought on my doctor, who gave the necessary information at once, and before the audience had seen either. Subsequently, the lady who did me the honour to produce my drama got me to add a couple of additional acts. The piece in this form was played in the provinces, but the alteration was not an improvement. Naturally enough, there had to be a pause of sixteen years between the second act and the third. After a while the actress returned to the one-act version, which was always favourably received.

Novel-
Writing
Dramatists.

I cannot help smiling when I read in some of the papers "our rising critics" suggesting that the novelists should come to the rescue of the drama, "should come and help us." Why, there is scarcely a first-rate romance writer of the last fifty years who has not also been a dramatist. Let us run through a few names. Charles Dickens wrote his first piece before his initial novel. "The Strange Gentleman" appeared before *Pickwick*. He subsequently found the stage less profitable than the circulating library and monthly part, and possibly that was the cause he preferred the latter. But he wrote *No Thoroughfare* with Wilkie Collins, and superintended the adaptation of *The Chimes* and other of his works when they passed through the hands of the late Mark Lemon and my father the late Gilbert Abbott à Beckett.

Lord Lytton, with his "Lady of Lyons," "Richelieu," and "Money," was quite as successful as a dramatist as a novelist, and the like may be said of Wilkie Collins.

Charles Reade and Dion Boucicault were both novelists. The latter contributed *The Flying Scud* as a feuilleton to a paper of which I was the Editor. The two together wrote *Foul Play* as a romance, and when the time came for dramatic adaptation each produced his own version, and refused to have anything to do with the other!

Burnand, Buchanan, and Besant in the present, and

Lord Tennyson, Byron, Watts Phillips, and Tom Robertson in the past, are names that can be added to the list of story writers as well as playwrights.

Shirley Brookes' pieces were as charming as his novels; and Douglas Jerrold's stories and essays have outlived his plays.

With the solitary exception of Thackeray (who dramatised "Lovel the Widower," and could not get it played) and George Eliot, I do not call to mind a novelist of the first rank that has not also at some time or another been a dramatist.

It may be that there are a few writers of the standing of James Payn, Stevenson, Rider Haggard, and the like who have never turned their attention to the stage because opportunity has never offered them an opening. A man of any mark nowadays has his work cut out for him always months, and sometimes years, in advance, and it is a difficult matter to find time for an extra. Novel-producing is sufficiently profitable to compete with the attractions of writing for the stage, handicapped as the latter sometimes is with the annoyances of the green-room and the actor-manager's office. But to say that our dramatists require assistance from our novelists to keep the drama from disappearing in disgrace seems to me a statement savouring of exaggeration.

The Career of a “Play-Bill Journal.”

The Birth
of
The *Glow-
worm*.

I was staying with my friend, the late Frank Marshall, at a little cottage he rented at Mortlake, at the end of the sixties. He was still at Somerset House, but I had left the Civil Service and we were both fiercely literary. Our great day was Sunday, when we generally had visitors, and on one of these occasions we entertained Mr. Wybrow Robertson, then Registrar of Designs, who was accompanied by Mrs. Wybrow Robertson, the elder daughter of Mr. Milner Gibson, then President of the Board of Trade. Mr. Wybrow Robertson was full of starting a paper which was to do wonders. It was to have the best of everything—the best city, the best sporting, and the best theatrical. It was to be edited by Mr. F. C. Burnand, and the staff was to consist of all the prominent journalists of the day. But *the* feature was, that it was to be sold in the music halls (then just starting) and the theatres. A council of war was subsequently held to choose a title for the coming journal. Many names were mentioned. I fancy I myself hinted at “The

Harlequin," a suggestion that was received with silent scorn, and ultimately "The Glow-worm" was adopted by acclamation. The unanswerable reason for this selection was, that the paper was to come out in the evening—a peculiarity shared by the insect. "And a glow-worm shines," said one of us, "and so will the paper." And this was so good that we were all delighted. I may add that the paper was never given its full title by the staff, as almost immediately after its appearance it was affectionately and appropriately termed "the poor old worm" by all who were cognisant of its fortunes.

A Private
Public
Company.

I hope, on some future occasion, to be able to give a brief history of the rise and fall of the *Glow-worm*, for the story will, I venture to think, afford both amusement and instruction; but at present I will confine what I have to say to a brief summary of what we did in the cause of what we used to call "programme reform." But before doing this I may put down a few particulars about the constitution of the *Glow-worm*. It was worked by a company of limited liability, and I was appointed the secretary, and a little later editor, of the paper. My secretarial duties were to hunt up the directors. We had only eight or nine shareholders, and they were, I believe, without an exception, members of the old Arlington Club. On one occasion, when it was necessary to hold a statutory

meeting, I collected them together in the hall of the club, and got the minute-book signed before they left the building.

A
Memorable
Banquet.

As I have already said, the object of the paper (besides serving as a model of everything that was excellent in journalism) was to supply the place occupied in Paris by the *Entr'acte*, the *Figaro Programme*, and the like. We devoted our first page to advertisements, and a bill of the play printed for every theatre and music hall. We gave the Thespian item in two colours, making a special feature of such lines as "First Night of a New Play" or "Great Success of the Bounding Brothers of Babylon." We had no trouble with the music halls. The proprietors were most kind and considerate, and immediately admitted our youthful emissaries to sell our "latest edition." Our managing director, who was a gentleman of a hospitable turn of mind, invited all the proprietors to a gorgeous banquet. A few members of the staff were also to be present, and the few included the late T. W. Robertson; Fred Clay, the composer; Andrew Halliday, the dramatist; my old friend, Tom Archer, and myself. The managing director had prepared an admirable speech, addressed to the proprietors, which was calculated to bring tears to the eyes of the most callous auditor. It was so flowery that it would have inspirited an army, and perhaps this was the reason it

fell a little flat on this occasion. Only one proprietor turned up! However, the managing director was not to be stopped—he had determined to air his eloquence, and he would have his way. The solitary music-hall proprietor was addressed as if he had been a multitude—he was entreated to improve the amusements of the people; he was informed that the eyes of Europe were upon him individually; and that he was the greatest power this world had ever seen, &c., &c. Tom Robertson, and I think all of us, roared with laughter, but the managing director only vented his anger upon me. We were on terms of great intimacy, and I was scarcely of age; still, I think some of his “asides,” intended to stop my mirth, were distinctly reprehensible. Of course I cannot remember the exact words, but the speech and “asides” were something in this fashion. He would say: “Yes, gentlemen—I mean my good sir—in your hands is the future of the human race” (*Aside to me*: “Shut up, you grinning young idiot!”). “Yes, sir, the Future looks towards you with outstretched arms, remindful of the unhappy Past.” (*Aside to me*: “If I hear another giggle, you somethinged young fool, I am somethinged if you shall have another mouthful of dinner!”) And so on. But I could not help laughing, especially when the solitary proprietor got up to return thanks; and, after explaining “that he did not spick English,” gave us an oration of about three-quarters of an hour, in a language that none of us understood! I

think his speech must have been in double Dutch, for Tom Robertson (who was a good German scholar) said he fancied he once recognised a word that in the Fatherland served as a slang expression for hearth-brooms! Subsequently my friend, the managing director, apologised to me for his hot temper, and explained that he did not address me in my private capacity, nor as the editor of an important evening paper, but only as the secretary of a company of limited liability!

Paper
versus
Programme.

With the theatres we had a hard battle. Although most of our staff were old dramatists, our united influence had no effect. We occasionally made friends with the lessees of the saloons, but after awhile the old-fashioned programme took the place of the "latest edition." Then a brilliant idea struck one of us—I fancy the managing director was responsible for the notion—that we should sell outside the playhouses our special theatrical issue; and as we had a general impression that objection might be taken if we gave the programme of the evening's entertainments *pur et simple*, we wrapped it up in a story. This is how we managed it:—"It was a magnificent sunset in Lancashire, when a tearful girl, who had wept herself to sleep, murmured in her slumbers, '*Box and Cox*,' forgetful of the fact that at that very moment '*Box* was *Buckstone*'—'*Cox*, *Compton*,' to say nothing of '*Mrs. Bouncer* being *Mrs. Wilkins*.'" Where I have used italic

we gave head-lines, and the descriptive matter was in the smallest type imaginable. I know we succeeded for a time, and I do not think we were "injuncted."

And now, before I bring my present recollections about the *Glow-worm* to a conclusion, two incidents occur to me which made a marked impression upon my mind at the time, and which even now seem to me worth noting. One of these incidents was the holding of a board meeting, when it was seriously proposed that the balance standing at the bank to the credit of the company should be put to the uttermost farthing on an outsider for the Cambridgeshire; and the second was the commission given to me to do my best to sell the paper, as it stood, to a Venerable Theologian—to in fact no less a person than the late lamented Cardinal Manning. I called upon the Venerable Theologian, feeling that my task was a very delicate one. However, he was exceedingly kind, and, although confessing that he had never seen the paper before, listened to what I had to say with admirable good nature. My idea was that it could be made a first-rate means for reclaiming those on the path to ruin. I pictured a purchaser of the *Glow-worm*, who had been attracted by its two-coloured programme, reading the sermons which were to take the place of leaders, and through their agency becoming reclaimed. I also (I could not help it—I was so proud of them)

A Tempting
Offer
to a Venerable
Theologian.

pointed out the many good points in our racing news. I called the attention of the Venerable Theologian to the fact that, not only did we give the names of the horses, but also the jockeys and the betting at the post. The Reverend Leader of Religious Thought listened to me patiently, and, when I had quite done, asked me this question: "My dear sir, does it not appear to you—as indeed it does to me—that there is something incongruous between Latest Sporting and Latest Ecclesiastical?" He did not buy the *Glow-worm*—I am afraid he was lacking in enterprise!

Round About King Street, Covent Garden.

The Haunt of a
Popular
Dramatist.

JUST before Christmas, a few years ago, there died in the Charter House an old gentleman—courteous, polished, and witty—who some short time before had had to appeal to the Public for that assistance which a benefit at a theatre is able to afford. It was my delight and privilege to meet him now and again several years ago, when we were both members of the Dramatic Authors' Society, and it was our custom to drop in of an afternoon to the rooms in King Street, Covent Garden, to have a chat, first with Sterling Coyne, and then with his successor in the Secretariat, J. Palgrave Simpson. I am sorry to say that I only met Mr. John Maddison Morton on these occasions, and never had the pleasure of his more intimate acquaintance. I remember that he told me that he had sent me anonymously a joke for a comic paper I then was editing, and that I had the gratification of replying that out of the piles of correspondence that I received day by day, his joke had escaped the yawning grave of the waste-paper basket—that although it came without a

name, it bore the mark that distinguishes the artist from the amateur. As I knew Mr. Maddison Morton so slightly, I should not have referred to him had not a conversation I held with a friend a day or two previously brought his name prominently before me. We had been talking of this and that, when I made a passing reference to the Dramatic Authors' Society as the only place in which I had met the author of "*Box and Cox*." "What was he doing there?" asked my friend, who is several years my junior. "Why, drawing his fees," I replied. And then my friend suggested that it might be a matter of interest if I were to jot down what I recollected of an association that has long since passed away—an association that in its time was honoured and prosperous. "It might lead to a discussion," he suggested, "as to whether it would be possible to revive it, and it might be useful, perhaps, to consider if anything were lost by its decay, death, and disappearance." This last remark was caused by a passing reference I had made to the great difference the non-existence of the Society had made in the affairs of the recently deceased dramatist.

When I met Mr. Maddison Morton in the
The Author
of
"*Box and Cox*." rooms on the third floor of King Street,
Covent Garden, we had, as a rule, both come
to see if "there was anything on the books for us." In
his case there invariably was. I believe I am under-

stating the sum when I say that the author of "Box and Cox" used to draw never less than £500 a year from the royalties received from country managers. Mr. Douglas Cox, who is still amongst us, can confirm or correct my statement. Mr. Douglas Cox was the able assistant to Mr. J. Palgrave Simpson for many years, and when my old friend resigned with a gratuity, became secretary himself. After the Society had disappeared in its original form, Mr. Cox kept the name up on an office he subsequently tenanted, and there was a talk of gathering the members together by holding quarterly meetings. But the project, I fancy, must have failed, for although I was a fairly prominent member of the Society, I have not heard of its existence for many years.

Members of the
D. A. S.—Past
and Present.

If anyone glances at the plays published by Mr. French, the successor of Mr. Lacy, of dramatists who flourished twenty years ago, it will be found that "Member of the Dramatic Authors' Society" usually appears on the frontage pages. Tom Taylor, Leicester Buckingham, Planché, Maddison Morton, Mark Lemon, Charles Reed, Gilbert à Beckett, and H. J. Byron were all members; and to come to the living, so were F. C. Burnand, W. S. Gilbert, A. W. Dubourg, Herman Merivale, and Sydney Grundy. It was a great institution, and I must confess that, although I did not draw many fees myself, except in a

fiduciary capacity, I deeply regretted its termination. It was certainly an honour to belong to this exceptionally pleasant gathering of brain-workers. The offices to which I have referred were situated over the premises of an insurance company, and a new member (proud of having been elected) used to run the chance of rushing into a board meeting of directors or the sanctum of a medical officer on his way to greet the secretary.

Mr. Palgrave
Simpson
as a
Secretary.

Our offices were small but compact. We had a clerk's room, which was covered with play-bills from every part of the United Kingdom, and then we entered a spacious saloon with two windows looking into King Street. This last apartment was decorated with photographs and busts of members of the Society, and seated at a desk littered with papers rested my dear old friend Mr. Palgrave Simpson, usually smoking a large cigar. Our secretary was supposed to devote two or three hours of his time to the business of the Society daily. "Dear Old Pal," as every one called one of the kindest, most courteous and most hospitable of gentlemen that ever lived, had usually a grievance. He was over-worked, so he said, and used to point to a pile of correspondence calling for immediate attention. But in spite of this, those who knew him (and we all knew him) used to sit down and indulge in a gossip. And what a delightful gossip it used to be! Palgrave Simpson was an admirable

conversationalist, and knew every good story going the rounds of the town. One of the most popular members of the Garrick, he had heard all the *on dits* of the far-famed smoking-room. He was an old frind of my father, and I knew him very well. He was my *collaborateur* in the dramatisation of one of my novels, and as an intimate I had the *entrée* of 9 Alfred Place West on a Sunday. And this was indeed a privilege.

Sunday in
Alfred Place
West.

Palgrave Simpson used to breakfast at one o'clock, and it was delightful to turn up in his pleasant drawing-room, full of books, pictures and *objets de vertu*, at about noon. Fortunately, many who used to come are still with the minority. Mr. Clement Scott, Mr. Arthur Blunt, Mr. Herman Merivale, and Mr. Dubourg are yet in the land of the living; but in the shadowy past I can see George Rose ("Arthur Sketchley") and Jack Clayton, Sir Charles Young and Freddy Clay, Edmund Yates and Corney Grain, and our host himself! What pleasant gatherings they used to be! What laughter, what good fellowship! My dear old friend died at an advanced age. He looked in the early prime of manhood when he was within measurable distance of seventy. He was a little proud of his youthful appearance. His custom was to ask a new acquaintance to guess his age, get a suitable answer, and then cause much surprise by avowing himself much older. I remember one day introducing

a short-sighted friend of mine to him. "How old do you think I am?" asked Palgrave Simpson, as usual. My friend, who only knew him by repute, and was unable to see him, answered, "Sixty-six." "No," returned Palgrave rather shortly, "sixty-seven." My friend had made a mistake—the answer expected of him was thirty-nine or forty. And really Mr. Palgrave Simpson looked no older.

Amongst the many stories that Palgrave Simpson told me was one about his first start as a dramatist. He used to live in Brompton after his return from Paris, where he had been a pupil of the great Scribe. He was of striking appearance, with long black hair and a moustache, and used to wear a cloak. During his walks abroad he came across a lady who seemed to shrink from him as if she feared him. One day he was passing by Thurloe Square, and gave a penny to a crossing-sweeper, and, hearing a cry of astonishment, turned sharply round. The exclamation came from the opposite side of the road. It emanated from the lady who had so frequently exhibited signs of apprehension at his approach, and who now seemed astounded at his little act of philanthropy. Shortly after this meeting, armed with a letter of introduction, he took a piece to a theatre in the Strand to read to one of the management. The author did his best, and the reading went off well. At the conclusion the manager

The End
of a Farce.

said: "And now, Mr. Palgrave Simpson, you must allow me to introduce you to my mother." At this moment a lady entered the room, in whom my friend recognised the stranger he had last seen in Thurloe Square. "This is Mr. Palgrave Simpson," said the manager, "who has been reading me a most amusing farce." "Good gracious!" exclaimed the lady, in the last stage of astonishment. "Why, it's the benevolent brigand!"

The Dramatic Authors' Society.

IN the last chapter I commenced an account
Again in King
Street, Covent
Garden. of the carrying on of the Dramatic Author's

Society, a body that for about half-a-century was a very prosperous institution, that after that period, for a year or so, seemed to stagnate, and then, a little later, practically collapse. With the best intentions I began the story as I knew it, and then, suddenly coming across the name of Mr. J. Palgrave Simpson, my pen rushed off at a tangent, and filled the chapter before I had time to say a dozen lines about the "D.A.S."

I have before me as I write "A Catalogue
The
Catalogue
of the
D.A.S. in 1784. of Dramatic Pieces, the property of the

members of the Dramatic Authors' Society, or their representatives, brought down to Sept., 1874." Mr. J. Palgrave Simpson is given as the secretary, and Mr. G. C. H. Lewis (the uncle of the present Sir George Lewis) as the solicitor, and the catalogue is said to be published at a shilling, by the Society, at their offices, 28 King Street, Convent Garden, W.C. There is a healthy tone of command on the front page: "Managers, &c." are requested to

notice that "the issue of this catalogue shall in no wise authorise the performance of any dramatic pieces specified therein," and are further threatened with the vengeance of the law if they in any way infringe the provisions of "the 2nd section of the statute 3rd William IV., cap. 15." The catalogue contains the names of some 2,300 pieces, which include all the plays of the period. Amongst them I was amused to notice a one-act farce by Mark Lemon, entitled "M.P. for the Rotten Borough." Whether this play had its scene in modern Wrottenborough, a place which has been rendered so famous by its distinguished member, or elsewhere, I do not know. But there is the piece. Mr. Herman Merivale was writing, under the *nomme de plume* of "Felix Dale," and I could not help noticing that, although Tom Taylor, Maddison Morton, and Planché were well to the fore, there was no trace of Burnand, Tom Robertson, and Gilbert. The absence of these last was conclusive of the fact that at least three of the leading dramatists of the day were conspicuous by their absence.

The
Advantages
of
Assessment.

The idea of the working of the Society was very simple. London was outside the sphere of its influence, and its field of action was the provinces. Every provincial theatre in England, with scarcely an exception, belonged to the Society, and was assessed according to its size and other considerations. The manager of a provincial theatre

had a right to play any of the pieces in the D.A.S. list on payment of a sum (governed by the assessment) per night. Say that £3 a night was the sum that the T.R., Mudborough, paid for an evening's entertainment, and that the manager put up "Friend Waggles," one-act farce, and "The Love Chase," five-act comedy. The manager would send up £3 and the play-bill. Then the money would be divided into sixths, as there were six acts in the night's programme. Then the secretary would put to the account of Mr. Sheridan Knowles (author of "The Love Chase") £2 10s., and to the account of Mr. Maddison Morton (author of "Friend Waggles") the remaining ten shillings, less in each case a small sum for commission. I need scarcely say that although the amounts were not large they were continually accumulating, for the pieces of the Society were being played nightly throughout the provinces all the year round.

Coming
Troubles.

In 1874 the absence of three of the most popular dramatists was ominous. It meant that the Society had not a monopoly of the playwrights, and without such a monopoly its power was naturally greatly diminished. By the rules of the institution every member was forced to put all his pieces on the list. Dramatists, who were then beginning to learn the real value of their plays, and finding that they could make better terms from outside the

Society than from within it, naturally chose the former position. To heal the breach the rules were revised, and authors were allowed to keep new pieces off the list for a certain time. This was the thin end of the wedge, and although the provincial managers grumbled, they submitted.

The
Beginning
of the
End.

Then all the absent playwrights joined or rejoined, as the case might be, and the new rules were further revised. Perfect freedom was given to a member to do exactly what he pleased with his pieces. He might put them on the list or keep them off at his own sweet will. The principal workers then elected to keep their pieces for themselves. This was a fatal blow to the Society. The managers, finding that they were paying for a number of old pieces, and could get no new ones, save by special arrangements with the authors, began to give up the Society as useless. "Why should they pay so much a night for the right of playing a number of pieces entirely out of date?" One after another the managers fell off. Then a playwright with a strong taste for accounts (the late Mr. Paul Merritt) suddenly discovered that the affairs of the Society were not quite satisfactory. It appeared that we had been paying for our annual dinner out of an inadequate income, mortgaging the amounts on our own books to do so. It was true that we had only taken money that had not been claimed

for years; but that, from an accountant's point of view, was a grave error of judgment. So the dinner was discontinued, and special committees were appointed. Before the rupture came we had accepted the resignation of Mr. Palgrave Simpson, our dear old secretary, and had forced upon his acceptance a gratuity. We were all pleased that we had presented him with a gratuity before we discovered the financial unsoundness of our position—at any rate (so some of us who had no heads for business argued) *that* was saved out of the fire, and was so much to the good.

The Special Committee, of which I was a
The
Last Meeting. member, diminished in numbers until, I believe, I was almost alone on it. At any rate, when the body of members were called together to consider the future of the Society with the assistance of its report, I found myself voted into the chair. It was rather a sad meeting, for we had practically come together to say good-bye. Thanks to the kind and laudable exertions of our friend the playwright with a taste for accounts, it was proved to admiration that we were not rich enough (to put it mildly) to go on any longer. There was present a dramatic author of eminent ability, with whom I had had a quarrel—I fancy there were faults on both sides, there were certainly some on mine—for many years, and this gentleman offered to subscribe a handsome sum to a fund to be started for the regeneration of

the Society. As my duties of chairman were slight, I thought the most useful thing I could do was to promptly accept this benevolent suggestion on behalf of the dying institution. But whenever I attempted to put a resolution to the effect that the generous contribution should be accepted, the member with the taste for accounts proved that the assistance would be valueless. Mr. Sydney Grundy, who was present, also conveyed the same idea. So, in spite of all my efforts to further the cause of charity at the cost of a gentleman with whom I had quarrelled, but whom for all that was well known for his benevolence, the fund was never opened. Thinking the matter over quietly, after a gap of fourteen or fifteen years, I am not sorry. The money so generously proffered would, I feel sure, have been wasted—the Society was at the moment beyond regeneration. The good old ship was sinking and beyond the reach of help.

An
Epilogue.

And what has been the result of the disappearance of the Dramatic Authors' Society?

I say disappearance, for the effort to keep it together, after it gave up its offices in King Street, came to little, and I have not heard of its existence for many years; so I may take it that it is surely dead, and if not buried, at any rate embalmed. Certainly, as a social gathering, it was delightful. But, leaving that point out of the question, has not the disappearance of the

“assessment” and “the list” practically destroyed stock companies in the provinces? Now, all is done by touring parties. But one thing has grown enormously since its decease, I refer to the piracy of plays. Not so long ago I was staying at a watering-place during the summer, and found a dramatic company located in the Town Hall. They were playing pieces by H. J. Byron and two or three well-known modern writers, under titles invented, apparently, on the spur of the moment. Say “Friends or Foes” (I take the name of a piece at random) was being played, it was appearing in the play-bills as “Intimates or Enemies”—and so on, and so on. I cannot help regretting the end of the Dramatic Authors’ Society. The drama still continues, but there was a good deal of heart-burning before the grand old association faded away into the land of things that have been and can never be again.

A Short and Merry Management.

A Confession
of
Inexperience. I CANNOT say myself that I have been the proprietor, manager, or lessee of a theatre—that, with the holding of the offices of Lord Chancellor, Commander of the Channel Fleet, and Chairman of the Bank of England, has yet to be done—but on one occasion I was intimately connected with what I may term a “short and merry management,” and was able to see how it was worked. Stay, I am wrong—on one occasion, for a day only, I was “sole and responsible manager” of the “Inner Temple Hall Theatre.” But that (as a modern author would say) “is another story.”

A
Dramatic Agent
Twenty
Years Ago. I had chambers in the early seventies over the offices of Mr. English, in Garrick Street, and Mr. English was the best of dramatic agents. He was a particularly pleasant gentleman, who, before adopting agency as an occupation, had served in the army, and, I believe, fought with distinction in the Crimea. In an earlier chapter I have described his peculiarity. He had the strange habit of giving

courtesy titles and alliterative Christian names to every noun of importance that he used in his conversation. For instance, if he wished to say that he was leaving London for the benefit of his health, he would write: "Your little E"—he generally spoke of himself thus, although he stood over six feet in his stockings—"is taking Master Sammy Self to Benjy Brighton, because the Doctor tells him that it will be good for poor little Charlie Constitution." He had a very large business, as he was known to be a thoroughly trustworthy and honest man. Naturally, living above his offices, I used to see him frequently, and on one occasion he was kind enough to ask me to step into his private room to discuss a matter of "Benjy Business." Said he, "Have you Master Christopher Comedy staying with you, because, if you have, I think your little E can take him to dear little Rosie Royalty." It appeared that he had been appointed general factotum of the theatre in Dean Street, Soho, on behalf of a lady hitherto little known to fame as either an actress or a manageress. As luck would have it, I had what I considered an excellent comedy on my bookshelves, and I told him so, but I stipulated that it should be well cast. I found that this certainly would be the case. The company that Mr. English had collected together was an excellent one. First, there was Mr. Henry Forrester, who had played with distinction at the Lyceum and Princess's; Mr. Teesdale, who had

made his mark at the Haymarket; Mr. Garthorne, a brother of Mr. Kendal; and last, but certainly not least, Mr. A. Wood, one of the best low comedians and character actors I have ever known. The ladies were not quite so strong, but that, from my point of view, was a matter of small importance, as I had only two females in my cast, and neither of them had much to do. Mr. English and I had no difficulty about "Tommy Terms." I found that the manageress had given him practically *carte blanche* to spend what was necessary. "Of course she would like to see it," said my friend; "you would not object to Master Rudy Reading?" Under the circumstances, I consented, and a few days later Mr. English told me that my comedy was accepted on the condition that I "wrote in" a speech about hunting. This I agreed to do, and "L.S.D." was underlined for production.

How to
"write in" a
Hunting
Speech.

When I came to make the necessary addition to my piece I found it a little difficult. My heroine made her appearance at eight in the morning to prepare breakfast for her father, and as this was the only suitable opportunity for a soliloquy upon fox-hunting, I had to put the speech in at this point. My heroine described what she had done on the previous day; but when we came to rehearse the play the manageress (who turned out to be a rather shy and altogether pleasing young lady) suggested, in faltering

accents, that as her chief reason for asking for the insertion of the speech was that she might be enabled to wear appropriately a riding habit, she would be deeply obliged if I would alter the time from the past to the present. To oblige her, I then made the description applicable to an event that had just happened. Thus it seemed that as she had evidently been hunting before breakfast, the M.H. must have been some harmless lunatic who had fixed the time of the meet for daybreak! I must confess that as a busy London man I had not seen much of cross-country riding, so my knowledge of the subject was rather elementary. However, I looked up the speech of Lady Gay Spanker in "London Assurance" and its excellent parody in "Scenes from the Rejected Comedies," by my father, the late Gilbert Abbott à Beckett, and combined the two. In the latter the fox (who had been found in a dry ditch), after outrunning the hounds sat down to count them! Then came a description of a "burst" of the dogs, "slapping away across the main road, *never stopping to look at the milestone*, but flying right over it pack and all—like waves over the sands at low water!" The run in "Floreat Eton" concludes with an account of the death. "They're off again! Reynard will be too much for them this time! Mark how he looks round and winks at the dog nearest to him. Now they give tongue! Ha! they will have him now! But, no; the turn in yonder copse has proved a harbour of refuge.

Yet, stay—what's that? A shepherd's dog, turning round the corner, meets Reynard face to face, and all is over!" The speaker finishes his description of this novel and rather undignified ending to Reynard's career by exclaiming: "There, Paidwell, let any man after that say, if he dare, that he despises fox-hunting"; to which Paidwell responds that he believes the sport to be "one of the bulwarks of the Constitution." I must confess that, even with the assistance to which I have referred, my account was scarcely "convincing," so at the last rehearsal I changed the fox-hunt into a morning gallop, by taking out the hounds and Reynard, and leaving in the riding habit. The manageress was satisfied, for she retained her costume, and I was pleased because, although fond enough of a horse, I have never cared particularly about riding to hounds. I may add that it was subsequently pointed out to me, after I had described this experience, that I might have reasonably surmounted my difficulties by making my heroine partial to cub hunting.

Amongst the company was an actor of a few months' standing. He had abandoned the profession of a solicitor to adorn the stage. He had made his mark in a comedy, entitled "Belgravia and Bohemia," that preceded mine, and at short notice he threw up his part. He said he was afraid of it; it was "too important." At that time I

A Quick
Change in
"L. S. D."

was connected with the Press, and I fancy that this was his "pretty way" of putting the fact that he did not think the part good enough for him without running the risk of giving me personal offence. However, Mr. English was equal to the occasion. He mentioned in the interest of "little Charlie Comedy" a dozen names available for the effacement of "Master Victor Vacancy." I selected my old acquaintance Mr. Belford, who at the moment happened to be "resting." He in the kindest manner undertook the part—a long one—and said that, although he could not promise to be letter perfect, he would at any rate know the cues. He was as good as his word. Accustomed to "touch and go" characters, he was rather impressed with the part I had given him—"Captain Cannon," an adventurer whose aim in life was revealed in his exclamation on becoming rich: "Thank Providence I can now afford to act like a gentleman!" I had given the Captain a number of cynical speeches, and Mr. Belford was distressed beyond measure that he could not remember them. On the first night I was watching anxiously at the wing, when, seeing me, he thought he would have a shot at one of them descriptive of the dodges and corruption of City life. He looked at me through his eye-glass and began: "Do you want to know the Stock Exchange in all its kaleidoscopic varieties? You shall, I will tell you. The Stock Exchange is like a diorama—" He looked at me, gazed imploringly at the prompter.

snapped his fingers and stuck. "Yes," he said, trying back, "I repeat like a diorama," and then, finding the words would *not* come, added, "and what it is further like, I will tell you *on some future occasion!*" But as a matter of fact he never did. Having once got his part to run smoothly, he left it as it was. On the whole, I do not think the play was injured by the cuts.

I shall not forget an incident on the first night of "L. S. D." Mr. Garthorne, who
Unexpected
Appearance of
an Author in
his own Piece. was playing the part of a subaltern with a hopeless attachment to the heroine, had to appear at a ball in the second act to read an important letter. At rehearsal the words of this letter had been omitted, as it was understood they "would be written out." As I have explained, I was standing at the wings, when to my horror Mr. Garthorne said to me in an agonised undertone, as the scene was proceeding, "I haven't got my letter." I hunted for and found the epistle, but then who was there to convey it to the actor? I could see no one. There was no time to lose, so I took the bull by the horns, and carried on the letter myself. Mr. Garthorne, who was for a moment alone on the stage, was extremely surprised to see me. I grasped him by the hand, and, giving him the letter, cried, "My dear fellow, forgive the liberty of an old friend! You dropped this out of your coat-pocket. And now pardon my departure—my bride

awaits me!" and I hurried off. I admit that my solitary and momentary appearance from an artistic point of view was indefensible, as I created a new interest (never to be satisfied) as to whom I was and what on earth I and my bride had to do with the plot, but I fancy I saved the comedy. It was the only occasion on which I have appeared in one of my own pieces before a paying audience.

“Passionate Brompton” Dramatised.

“THE COLONEL” began it. Until Mr. ^{How} “The Colonel” Burnand produced his excellent comedy at took command the old Prince of Wales’ Theatre, off the at the Prince of Wales’. Tottenham Court Road, the aspirations of “Passionate Brompton” were little known. It is quite true that a number of sketches had appeared in the pages of *Punch* from the graceful pen of my doubly-accomplished friend, Mr. Du Maurier, artist and *littérateur*, dealing with some of the absurdities of the worshippers of blue china and the lily; but no one had seen those worshippers in the flesh. It was left to the brilliant editor of the *London Charivari* to introduce them to the public in one of the cleverest comedies of modern times—a play that has travelled all over the world, finding its way into Indian palaces, American encampments, Australian clearings, and even to the presence of Her Majesty at her Highland home in Balmoral. I have reasons for believing that the author of “The Colonel,” when the thrice “happy thought” entered his mind to satirise the characteristics of the

Anti-Philistines, intended his play for a theatre south of the old Prince of Wales’. But occasion offering, he showed it to Mr. Edgar Bruce, who had recently become lessee of the temple of the drama off the Tottenham Court Road, with the result that the youngest of theatrical managers, to use a colloquialism, “jumped at it,” and with its assistance improved his rising fortunes.

The Stage
holds the
Mirror up to
Taste.

One of the most striking features of “The Colonel” was the scene of the first act, which represented a room decorated in the Æsthetic fashion. There were fans, and dados, and china. Nowadays it would have passed without attracting the smallest attention, for the simple reason that it absolutely set an example which has since been universally followed. All modern sitting-rooms are furnished more or less *à la mode* “The Colonel.” Then the scene of the second act (which was, of course, a contrast to the first), with its Philistine flowered wall-paper and its carpet of the gaudiest pattern imaginable, familiar to us enough in the past, would now be considered absolutely unconventional. Again, the dresses of the ladies—Mrs. Pinero, Mrs. Gaston Murray, and Miss Cissy Grahame—then strange indeed, would be accepted nowadays as nothing out of the common. And here I may note that London had been prepared for this change of taste some years before, when my friend, the late Mr. Alfred Thompson, designed

the dresses for the burlesques, or rather I should say, the comic operas, at the Gaiety. In the "Princesse de Trebizonde," in which Mr. Toole used to invite Miss Nellie Farren to "keep her eye upon her father, and he would pull her through," Mr. Thompson introduced the most glaring contrasts in colour. In the past, green and blue in juxta-position were considered hideous, but my friend (who, by the way, commenced his career as an officer of light cavalry, then wrote plays and novels, and finally designed dresses) showed that by a judicious selection of hues and shades, almost any combination might be made not only bearable, but absolutely pleasing. To return to "The Colonel," it is to that piece the world owes modern decorations and modern costumes. Society came to scoff at the æsthetic craze, and remained to take notes for future guidance. There has been, as usual, a survival of the fittest. The colours and hues are still with us, but blue china is neglected, and lilies are no longer to be preferred to violets, orchids, or even roses.

The Early
Career of
Mr. Coghlan.

Excellently played as it was by all concerned, perhaps *the* feature of the cast was Mr. Coghlan, who, as the American Colonel who set everything to rights, was simply perfection. I had seen him at the Prince of Wales' at the end of the Bancroft management, when he had appeared as Shylock in "The Merchant of Venice," with Miss Ellen

Terry as Portia. Although his reading was distinctly intelligent, it was disappointing, and, to adopt the modern phrase, "failed to please." The mounting of Shakespeare's tragi-comedy was admirable, and showed what could be done in the shape of pictorial illusion on the stage of the smallest dimensions. Not long before Mr. Coghlan went to the Prince of Wales' he had appeared at the Olympic in "The Hidden Hand," by Tom Taylor, a piece which included in its original cast Miss Kate Terry, Miss Lydia Foot, Miss Nellie Farren, Mr. Henry Neville, and Mr. Horace Wigan. But before that I had seen him playing in a piece at the St. James's as a swell of the type of Sir Frederick Blount.

Setting the
Lord
Chamberlain
at Defiance.

The play was an excellent one, albeit a free adaptation from the French. It was by a new author, and the critics were most anxious to hear his work, as he had made his mark in other branches of literature. I was present at the initial performance, and shall never forget an incident that occurred within a minute of the raising of the curtain in the first scene. The author (who had known me all my life) was accustomed to pass down a dark court that ran beside the theatre on his way to the stage-door to attend the rehearsals. In his journey through this court he noticed in a cage a very dignified and apparently reserved parrot, that used to eye him

with a supercilious glance as he passed. It was the commencement of the rage for realism, and when the final rehearsal was reached, the author of the piece suggested that the first scene needed a few palms—something living. “Why not a stuffed bird?” asked the stage manager, who, having had a good deal of hard work, was not in the sweetest of tempers. “Why not a real one?” retorted the author. He then started for home, and, as usual, passed through the court, when again he noticed the dignified and reserved parrot seemingly eyeing him with increased superciliousness. A bright idea occurred to him. Why not introduce the parrot into his piece? It would be the very thing for the first scene! He struck a bargain with the owner, and on the first night, when the stage was cleared and all was ready to begin, there was the parrot perched in his cage, dignified and reserved as ever, gazing at the prompter with an expression of contempt on his beak that defied description. The curtain rose, and the critics eagerly listened for the first words of the new author. There was a slight stage wait, and then, as Mr. Rudyard Kipling would say, “a strange thing happened.” The parrot, turning his attention from the prompter, fixed his gaze upon the audience. He started back, then began to dance. Then he whistled, and, apparently influenced by some strange association of ideas, commenced to swear in a fashion that would have aroused the indignant remonstrances of the

meekest and most conciliatory of Lord Chamberlains !
Oh ! the language that bird used, and continued to use,
until removed by a liveried stage-carpenter ! And this
was the first impression that the critics obtained of the
polished dialogue of the new author !

How to Conciliate an Audience.

ON more than one occasion when a piece
The End
justifying the
Means. has not gone well on a first night (especially
during the third act), the author has bowed
to what seemed to him to be the wishes of the audience
and has altered the plot.

Leaving out of the question the alternative
A Couple of
Fates for "The
Octoroon." endings of Mr. Pinero's interesting play,
called "The Profligate," I know of no more
notable case of the change in a last act than in the
matter of "The Octoroon." This was the piece that
followed "The Colleen Bawn" at the Adelphi, and was
written by the same author. The clever adaptation of
Griffin's "Collegians," with its sensational effects in
"The Water Cave," had made a deep impression upon
the public. All London was on the *qui vive* for the
next production of the little-known author (for people
had had time to forget, during his absence in America,
that the original Myles na Coppaleen was the writer of
"London Assurance," and the adapter of "Louis XI,"

"The Corsican Brothers," and "Faust and Marguerite"), and deeply interested in any novel assumption that he and his charming wife might adopt for its entertainment. "The Colleen Bawn" had had an admirable cast. First there had been the author and Miss Agnes Robertson (Mrs. Dion Boucicault) as the typical Irish peasants—one comic, the other pathetic, and both sentimental. Mr. Billington was the noble-hearted Irish squire; Miss Woolgar (subsequently Mrs. Alfred Mellon), the high-spirited Irish girl; Edmund Falconer, the deformed Irish retainer, faithful to "the family" to the extreme limit of committing murder to better its fortunes; Mr. Stephenson, the kindly-natured Irish priest. How would these be suited?—especially Mr. and Mrs. Boucicault—became the question. The answer was given in "The Octoroon." The author was turned into a sharp, good-hearted Irish-American overseer, and his wife into a white slave of the most attractive kind—well educated, beautiful and refined. The hero of the story wanted to marry her, but the curse of Ham barred the nuptials. In every eight drops of blood one was black, and this was sufficient to prevent the union. So the white slave was put up to auction, sold—and died. There was the fault. The public had grown accustomed to seeing in "The Colleen Bawn" Miss Agnes Robertson drowned in the third act and resuscitated in the fourth, and they were disappointed when Zoe really expired, in spite of the slow music and

a transparency at the back of the stage, that were seemingly introduced to soothe her last moments. With scarcely an exception the Press condemned the death of the heroine of the play as unnecessary, and Mr. Dion Boucicault bowed to Public Opinion, and promptly substituted in the place of the gloomy last act a happy ending.

Meeting a
Vampire
Face to Face.

My first meeting with the author of "London Assurance" made a deep impression upon me, because it came about in a strange manner. Before leaving the Princess's, then under Charles Kean's management, Boucicault had produced a terrible play called "The Vampire." There was a pause of a century between every act—a hundred years were supposed to pass during the ten minutes devoted to changing the scene and "music by the band." In each of the three parts Boucicault appeared as a white-faced murderer, who fascinated his victims before enriching his veins with their life-blood. It was a horrible idea, and I am told (for the play was before my time) that people used to go into hysterics in the pit, and faint in the boxes. When a change of bill was required at the Adelphi, Boucicault cut down this play into a couple of acts, and called it "The Phantom." He again appeared as the murderer with the white face, and his glance was supposed to be fatal. I was present at the initial performance, and was haunted long afterwards

by the pale features (unrelieved by any "make up") and the cold fixed stare! Shortly afterwards I was asked to a garden party at Teddington, and making a mistake about a train (I went to catch a special at 12 noon from Waterloo, which I subsequently discovered started from the other end at midnight), I arrived at my destination prematurely. I was about two hours before my time. The waiters, in their shirt-sleeves, were busy getting the refreshments ready, and I heard voices from above, calling for the assistance of ladies'-maids, that led me to believe that the garden-party toilettes of the daughters of the house were not completed. In those days I was young and bashful—the first fault I have since mended, but not the latter—so I tried to make myself scarce. I wandered into the garden, and then it began to rain. I took shelter in a boat-house, and, finding the wherry ready for use, made a sofa of the cushions, and went to sleep. I woke with a start. The boat was being pushed into the water, and staring at me from under the shelter of a regulation Lincoln and Bennett was the Vampire! For a moment I thought my last hour had come, and then I was introduced to Mr. Dion Boucicault!

A Specimen of
London
Assurance.

On the same occasion an amusing incident occurred: Among the guests was a gentleman of infinite humour. He is still happily amongst us, and, as of late years he has discarded

practical joking, I refrain from mentioning his name. I had the pleasure of meeting him not very long ago, when we (in company with some hundred others) were giving some distinguished actor a farewell dinner, and I then had an opportunity of reminding him of an occasion of a somewhat similar character, when he was good enough to return thanks for all the toasts before the gentlemen, whose names were on the programme, had time to respond. Well, this gentleman was present at the garden party, and, being an excellent mimic, was giving an imitation of various popular actors. After copying Buckstone, Compton, Fechter, and Webster, the humourist—who, I fancy, was not aware of the presence of Dion (not that I think the knowledge of the fact would have made *much* difference to him)—ultimately gave an imitation of Boucicault. The author of “The Colleen Bawn,” who was looking on with a smile upon his face, came forward and said good-naturedly, “Let me have a try at that,” and then repeated a long and telling speech in the character of Myles na Coppaleen. “There, what do *you* think of that?” asked Boucicault, after the applause which rewarded his representation was over, turning to the man who five minutes before had been mimicking him. “Not nearly so like as mine!” was the immediate reply. And really my friend the mimic was right. In the imitation were found prominently introduced many of the characteristics absent from the original.

Ada Isaacs
Menken
at Home.

But to return to play-altering to please an audience—the subject with which I started this instalment of my recollections. The piece, I think, that saw as much alteration as any was one written by myself, in collaboration with an eminent dramatist, who I still (in spite of the work we did together) am able to number as one of my most valued and dearest friends. The play has never been acted, and is still a much-altered scenario. As it may yet make our fortunes (and the fortunes of those who are wise enough to produce it), it would be manifestly sheer madness to publish its subject. So I will merely hint that there is in it a grand part for a tragic actress. Our first idea was to get Miss Bateman (fresh from her success in “Leah”) to undertake the duty. We appropriated the time of the Crusades for the period—a time about which little is (dramatically) known—but when the negotiations were on the point of coming to something tangible our intended heroine found that she was forced to make other engagements. But we were not disheartened, and took the play to Ada Isaacs Menken, a lady who was then drawing all London to Astley’s by performing equestrian feats of daring in the costume of Mazeppa. We thought it better to go together, but my collaborateur was to read the scenario. I shall never forget our introduction to the lady. It was about noon when we called on the female representative of “Mazeppa,” and found her having her

breakfast (which consisted, among other luxuries, of a red herring), in a venerable morning robe. She looked rather sallow by daylight, but was most kind and courteous, still extremely taciturn. My colleague read the scenario, which had been copied out by me, and stumbled over my descriptions. He said subsequently he could not decipher my handwriting. We had, during the reading, some rather undignified altercations upon various points in the plot. "At this moment," said my friend, thinking he had got my MS. pretty straight, "Eleanor rushes up to the standard. Very pretty effect! Sunset! Glittering armour! Most telling. Well, I repeat, Eleanor rushes up to the standard!" "I beg pardon," I was forced to interpose, "Eleanor does *not* rush up to the standard!" "No!" exclaimed my collaborateur, who had entirely forgotten what we had arranged. "Not rush up the standard?" "Certainly not," I answered firmly; "you are confusing the scene with Richard's subsequent behaviour in Act IV." "Then what on earth does Eleanor do?" asked my collaborateur a little angrily. "Why," I replied calmly, with the dignity of superior knowledge, "Eleanor clasps her boy to her heart, and with him enters the Monastery." And so on, and so on. Well, "Madame" (as we found she was called by her household), although full of admiration for our play, said we should hear from her. In due course we did, through her agent, who told us that she was very much struck with the

part,“ but, between him and us, was obliged to decline it, as she (Madame) was better in attitudes than blank verse !” And, thinking it over calmly, we were inclined to agree with him.

History by
Leaps
and Bounds.

Our last attempt (we made several others, which I will leave unrecorded) was at the Alhambra, when a gentleman of the name of Strange was the new manager. Mr. Strange, although very probably a most excellent person, was not entirely accepted by the World of Letters as the best possible representative of the Higher Education. The Alhambra was on the eve of becoming a theatre, and we thought our piece might be treated as a spectacle. I interviewed the manager on behalf of my collaborateur and myself. I explained how we had laid the scene in the time of the Danish invasion, when Alfred was King of England—the scenario had at length shaped itself into that form, and we had decided to leave it as it was after our last attempt to get rid of it—and was enthusiastic in my praise of the hardy old Norse Kings. Mr. Strange listened attentively, and then asked: “Do you think you could get in a Chinese ballet?” Determined to smooth objections, I replied: “Why, of course! Some of the old rovers of the sea that I have been telling you about have visited the Celestial Empire and returned with Chinese captives! An excellent idea! Just what the play wanted, a Chinese ballet. Capital!” “You

think so," said Mr. Strange, evidently pleased at my enthusiasm. "Well, I really believe I see my way. There's only one other thing—but that won't be difficult, if you manage it properly—we must have a *minuet* danced by shepherds and shepherdesses dressed *à la Watteau* in silk stockings, patches, and powder!" I said I would see if this could be done in a play of the time of King Alfred. This happened many years ago, and I am still giving the problem occasional but (as yet) unproductive consideration.

Pen and Paint at the Play.

Drama
unadorned is
not adorned
the most.

It is rather the fashion to imagine nowadays that everything is infinitely more elaborate at this moment than in the hours of long ago. In the time of Shakespeare it is popularly supposed that a plain tapestry curtain labelled "This is a palace," or "Here you have a battlefield," was considered a sufficient background to any kind of play. This is an entirely erroneous impression. In the days of Elizabeth and her successor, James the First, "maskes" flourished, and these entertainments were adorned with any amount of "scenic accessories." It was my duty (as I have mentioned elsewhere) some years ago to read a number of these productions, and I was surprised to find that, so far from scenery being ignored, nearly two-thirds of the libretto of a "maske" was usually devoted to a description of its set pieces. In the course of these recollections I have referred once or twice to a performance of a "Jacobean Revival" at Gray's Inn and the Inner Temple, in which I was personally interested, and in that case the most elaborate scenery had to be provided. My lamented friend, the late Mr. John O'Connor, took the matter in hand for me and painted

some delightful cloths. He said that the "Maske of Flowers," when it was originally produced in the time of James the First, at Whitehall, would have employed the brushes of the Court painters for months. And I can well believe it, for certainly the directions for the production of "towers," "fairy fountains," "magical gardens" and the like were many and voluminous. In the 18th century our ancestors delighted in spectacle, and for the last ninety years or so, I venture to say, a British Public has never been better pleased than when entertained by a "pictorial representation." That the said British Public can have too much of a scene is true enough, as in the case of "Oonah"—and that reminds me that I have promised to give my recollections of the first night of that wonderful play before I, too (like so many of my colleagues), have joined the majority.

I think the once-celebrated drama may be
The Survivors
of "Oonah." called "the Waterloo of plays." The author
was the Napoleon, and the audience Wellington, Blucher, and the Allied Armies. I met the other day a dramatic critic, who was present at the engagement, and he suggested that we who still survived should dine together year by year to celebrate the event, and, if possible, wear medals. If we could carry the idea into execution, I fancy the company at the banquet would consist of Messrs. Joseph Knight, Clement Scott, W. S. Gilbert, Alfred Watson, Suther-

land Edwards, and myself. The notion has one merit : the toast of "The First Night of 'Oonah'" (which, of course, would be drunk in solemn silence) would furnish an endless theme to those called upon to respond. It was emphatically a first night, and one never to be forgotten by those who were present. But first about the scene, to which I have referred as too much for any audience.

Rather
Too Much
"Cornfield."

The play was produced at Her Majesty's Theatre, in the Haymarket. The lessee was Mr. Edmund Falconer, an author who had made his mark in a piece called "Extremes," one or two clever adaptations from the French, notably "Ruy Blas," and more recently "Peep o' Day," which enjoyed a long run at the Lyceum shortly after the production of "The Colleen Bawn." Falconer had joined Chatterton in the management of Drury Lane, and the combination had not been entirely satisfactory. I rather fancy that there had been some dispute about the prices to be charged for seats in the dress circle. At any rate, the partnership had been dissolved, and this was the moment for the production of "Oonah." Edmund Falconer (whose real name was Rourke) was an Irishman, and the period of his play was placed at the end of the last century, when rebellion was abroad (or rather very much at home) in "the most distressful country that ever yet was known." It consisted of any

number of scenes, and one of them represented "a cornfield." It was remarkably well painted, and when it first appeared was greeted with loud applause by a very crowded house. The progress of the story was continued in some other place, and then we had the cornfield again. We were quite pleased to have another glance at it, and again there was applause. Another scene came, and then once more the cornfield. This time the audience were a little impatient, and murmurs were heard in the auditorium. But these murmurs were mild indeed when compared with the shout of derision and defiance with which the fourth appearance of the cornfield was greeted. As ill-luck would have it, the play concluded with the same unfortunate *tableau*, and gave a finishing touch to an evening full of disaster.

Matters
Private and
Political.

But this was only a minor matter. As I have already said, "Oonah" dealt with political affairs, and a few of its *dramatis personæ* (the cast was a very long one) were Mayors and other officials. Alas! these gentry did not confine their remarks to the condition of the state of Ireland, but occasionally wandered (so far as I can remember) into the recent misunderstanding that had occurred at Drury Lane. There was so much row going on in the front of the house that it was difficult to catch all the actors said, but I have an impression that a speech something

like the following was made during the course of the evening's entertainment: "There now," would exclaim a Mayor, or a High Sheriff, or a Lord Chief Justice, "the wrongs of Ireland will never be righted until the Emerald Isle is as free as the sea in which she is set, like an opal mounted in silver. And in like manner, Old Drury will never prosper until the seats in the Dress Circle are worthy of those who occupy them." When direct reference was made to the inter-managerial misunderstanding, the author's friends applauded vigorously. Of course the allusions must have been a little more "wrapped up" than the above specimen, but that was the impression left on my mind at the time—an impression that has not been since disturbed.

But what really killed "Oonah" was its enormous length. It began at seven o'clock sharp, and was still being played at one o'clock the following morning. By degrees the audience dwindled and dwindled until at last the house was nearly empty. Those who were supposed to be spectators were paying the actors on the stage but the most perfunctory attention, and chatted amongst themselves—the stalls greeted the private boxes, and the pit fraternised with the gallery. Towards the end of the performance the hero, addressing some of his followers, invited them to "away with him" to somewhere or other. Upon this a wag in the pit cried out politely,

Just a Little
Too Long.

"Oh, don't go! Your conversation isn't disturbing us in the least. We assure you we are treating it as a private communication between you and those gentlemen." But when the hero was found in the next scene in the cornfield, the jeering was distinctly audible. And here a strange thing happened. Some official in command of a stage cloth ordered it to "go," upon which the entire company were dragged off their feet and nearly landed in the orchestra. Then poor Falconer appeared, suffering from deep emotion, and spoke the tag. Then came the curtain, and we critics hurried off to our work. My own notice in an evening paper was headed, "Production of 'Oonah'—this morning."

Besides its extreme length, there were other Bathos *versus* Pathos. drawbacks that prejudiced the success of "Oonah." I am afraid it had not been very well rehearsed. For instance, there were a pair of lovers who had to exchange vows underneath a tree, and, as an omen of ill-luck, the tree had to be struck by lightning at the moment of the lady giving her consent. By some mistake the thunderbolt was premature, and shattered the boughs before the interesting couple had got much beyond a conventional "Good-morning;" so when the heroine shrank from the first chaste kiss of her lover, the latter had to refer to the incident of the lightning] that had arrived before its time to explain that it was the electric fluid and not the touch of his

lips upon her brow that had alarmed her. "I see," said he, "that you too have noticed that thunderbolt that attracted my attention some little while ago. Ah! believe me," etc., etc. Then Mr. John Ryder had to kill a gentleman who somehow or other had got buried up to his neck in the earth. While the best exponent of the old legitimate drama was threatening his victim with an enormous pickaxe, the flats were joined of another scene. I suppose that "Jack" refused to be deprived of his sensational murder; for certainly, after some little dialogue had been got through in front of the new scene, the flats were drawn off and Ryder and his trembling enemy were found in the same situation as before. Then Mr. Ryder, after a speech full of fire and declamation, brought down his pickaxe on the unfortunate head of the doomed one, and the curtain fell amidst general amusement. But the great scene of the piece was the trial of the hero for murder. The audience were so tired that they were glad to see the cast lessened by any device. Consequently, when the hero was found guilty and condemned to instant death, the entire house rose and cheered heartily. The poor author, who had made his mark as Danny Mann in "The Colleen Bawn," played a part of a somewhat similar character, and now and again expressed his fears that "he would die like a dog in a ditch, with his tongue hanging out." This expression, for some reason or other, made the audience roar, and, whenever it was

repeated, the words were received with shouts of merriment. I must confess that it was a wonderful evening, and that, although I sympathised with the unfortunate Falconer, I could not help laughing.

The Long
and the
Short of it.

I do not think "Oonah" was played more than twice or thrice. I had occasion to see the author shortly after its production, and found him very much excited. He was convinced that the Press "were banded to blight him," and said as much. I hinted that perhaps his play was a trifle too long. "Too long!" he exclaimed. "Why, it is too short! I was foolish enough at rehearsal to cut out some lines in one of the scenes. But I am going to put 'em back, sir; and, what's more, write up some of the minor parts. Too long, indeed! I will too long them!" Poor fellow, the failure of his piece was a bitter trial to him, and I do not think he ever recovered from it. After "Oonah" we heard little of Edmund Falconer, and his personality soon faded away into a half-forgotten name. But, for all that, he was a scholar and a gentleman. He was a clever writer, a capital actor, but was never intended by nature to be his own manager.

6

THE END.

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